IN MEMORY OF ME

Or

The Holy Mass Worthily Offered

JOHN L. FORSTER, S.J.

Sp 1,35

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A.M.D.G.

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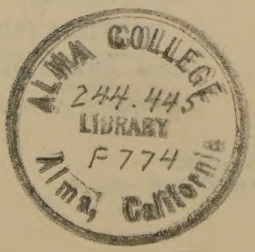
By

JOHN L. FORSTER, S.J.
St Patrick's College, Melbourne



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IMPRIMI POTEST, *si iis ad quod pertinet videbitur.*

J. SULLIVAN, S.J.,
Sup. Miss. S. J. Australiae.

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Soli sapienti, DEO,
per JESUM CHRISTUM, honor et gloria!

To GOD, the only wise,
be honour and glory,
through JESUS CHRIST!
(*Rom.* xvi 27.)

A. M. D. G.

FOREWORD

This small volume on the Holy Mass,

IN MEMORY OF ME,

is an attempt to unfold to lay-folk, young and old, some of the mysteries surrounding the Christian Altar.

An intellectual insight into the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, our Priceless Heritage, is the specific aim of the book.

It has been written also to encourage the study of the Liturgy, a study which seems nowadays to be becoming more widespread.

Our Liturgy is not a dead thing; whether it be looked at from a historical, instructional, or mystical point of view, it is the source of very many rich treasures. It has been planned to help the faithful to participate intimately in our great sacrificial Action. They are thus enabled to maintain the bond that was restored by Christ in the Redemption. The union between their souls and the Creator is more and more cemented; and this union will be both a forerunner and a token of the final espousals of their souls with the heavenly Bridegroom.

A closer attention to the treasure of the Church in her Liturgy will help also to connect the links in the chain of ideas expressed or implied, in the

beautiful prayers and ceremonies of the Church, and especially in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

These ideas are bound together into a wonderful system, that all should make it a point of duty to study and understand. In the chain, one will not fail to recognise the important, nay integral, part the *Communion* plays in the system, designed as it is, to effect the union of our human nature, through Christ, with our Father in heaven.

From the form of this little treatise, it will be apparent that it is not meant as a book to be lightly read and set aside. The paragraphs are usually short, and separated, that *thought and reflection* on the transcendent theme may be evoked and stimulated.

Throughout the book a certain simplicity of style and form has been aimed at, that it may with profit be put into the hands of the elder pupils in our Colleges and Schools.

The Mass prayers (printed in Italics), in Part II, have been set out in detail, in order that their meaning may be more fully understood and *realised*.

All know that our real life is an interior rather than a merely exterior one. We are told to seek first the kingdom of God and that all else will be added as a matter of course. This entails our living as much as is consistent with our various avocations in *constant union with God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* The doctrine of our faith that the Trinity *really abides within us*, as long as we are in the state of grace, seems one that is little realised

and perhaps less appreciated. God alone can satisfy the hunger and quench the thirst of the human heart. No creature has this power.

In our fallen state, however, we find it difficult to maintain a continual remembrance of God's presence in our souls. For this purpose we need many helps at the hands of our Creator. Of all the helps left us by Him to "abide in His love," the Sacrifice of the Mass is the one that stands supreme.

It is not sufficient, however, to know that we have such a help on our journey through life; we should make ourselves conversant with what our "heirloom" contains, by study and meditation. In these pages, it is hoped, some will find food for thought for the end here proposed.

Stress is laid on the advantages of possessing a Missal—the "official score" of the Mass-rite. Thanks to the efforts of those interested in the spread of devotion to the Mass and to the Blessed Sacrament, the knowledge of the Missal is becoming daily more general.

It is to be desired that boys and girls, even of ten or twelve years, should have a copy. About that age it might be given to them as a Birthday Gift. With a little explanation, the average child will readily understand its use.

As well as being an incentive to them to *offer* the Mass oftener, their having a Missal will have the beneficial effect of keeping their minds better occupied during the celebration of the august mysteries, and of their taking a far more active

and intelligent part in what is going on at the Altar.

That our Catholic people should endeavour to realise that they *participate closely in the offering of the Mass, forming one as far as may be with the celebrant, and even with Christ Himself*, has been insisted upon repeatedly in the little work as being a matter of no small moment.

How forceful, though brief, is not the request of the holy Pontiff, Pius X, to the faithful, regarding the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass! "Do not merely pray at Mass," he urged, but "pray the Mass!"

It is by union with God through the Holy Sacrifice, and subsequent reception of the Blessed Eucharist, that we best pray to God, giving ourselves as far as may be to belong wholly to Him.

Hence, the faithful are exhorted to identify themselves, in union with the priest, with JESUS CHRIST the principal Offerer, as well as with the gifts offered.

With Christ, they are, in part, themselves the gifts.

The chief end of sacrifice offered by man to his Maker can hardly be said to be one of expiation and atonement. That this idea is contained in sacrifice there is no doubt. But, there is also another and stronger motive urging to sacrifice.

Man's fundamental purpose in sacrifice is to give honour, reverence and submission to the Almighty Whom he recognises as the One from Whom he has received his all. This intention is best expressed by conformity of will with God's designs. Man's

acts are closely connected with the heart, the seat of love. With increasing knowledge and consequent love for God, should come an increase of the desire of service, which shows itself in its highest form in sacrifice.

It is this idea, nurtured through the consideration of God's goodness and mercy, that sets its seal on sacrifice rather than one of fear and dread arising from God's inexorable justice. That is, in spite of our failings, we are drawn to God rather by love, as to a Father, than from a motive of awe.

To approach, however, to the Deity, we must become, like Him, holy. Hence the added desire of the person offering sacrifice, for sanctity, for dedication and consecration to his Maker. This grace is the constant petition in the Canon of the Mass; for, the greater the sanctification, the greater will be the conformity; and this finds its consummation in this life in Holy Communion.

To be able to effect such a union is, for us mortals, a blessed favour and a privilege. God's acceptation of our offerings—and with them ourselves—fills us with gladness, for we feel that He counts us among His friends. We are also strengthened and encouraged to make other little sacrifices during the day, in union with our offering made at Mass in the morning.

Though the "High" Mass is the ideal of the Liturgy, and might be called its culminating point, in view of the restricted opportunities of the faithful for being present at it, it has been thought well to

treat in this small volume of the "Low" Mass only—that is, the Mass in its simpler form.

The author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to: Dr. Gihr, *The Sacrifice of the Mass*; Père Chaignon, S.J., *The Sacrifice of the Mass Worthily Celebrated*; Fr. John O'Brien, A.M., *The History of the Mass*; Abbot Cabrol, O.S.B., *Liturgical Sacrifice*; Fr. Joseph Kramp, S.J., *Liturgical Sacrifice of the New Law*; Père de la Taille, S.J., Fr. Thomas Hughes, S.J., *Talks on Truth*; Fr. Adrian Fortescue, *The Missal*; as well as to other writers referred to in the course of the book.

THE AUTHOR.

St Patrick's College,
Melbourne,
Feast of Corpus Christi,
7th June, 1928.

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IN MEMORY OF ME

PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

A PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION

JESUS!

That by Thee, with Thee, and in Thee,
The King of all Ages,
All honour and glory may be to the Father,
The Immortal, Invisible and only God,
For ever and ever. Amen!
(*Adapted from* 1 *Tim.* i 17.)

"AND it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk: and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns. . . . And Judea shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to generation and generation" (Joel iii 18, 20).

That we find ourselves professing the true faith, and consequently amongst those in whom this prophecy has been fulfilled, should be to us a subject for the deepest gratitude.

The earth is, as it were, furrowed with the Seven Streams of grace that have "come forth of the house

of the Lord," issuing from the Sacred Side of Christ, that we may have the strength and courage to pursue our course *up* the " torrent of thorns " that leads to our true home.

Judea shall, indeed, be inhabited for ever and ever, and the New Jerusalem to generation and generation.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with its God-sent gift is, in a certain sense, the fountain source whence spring all these graces and which fills all the channels bearing " Life " to us.

In the following pages we shall try to understand better the value to us of this twofold Source of grace—The Mass—as a Sacrifice and as a Sacrament. Let us raise our hearts—*sursum corda*—to the Holy Trinity for light and help in our task, and beg our Lady's aid, that our humble effort may redound to the honour and glory of the Triune God.

* * * * *

How keen we all are to render ourselves efficient in whatever is necessary for our position—profession or trade—in life!

What years of study we devote to acquiring the aptitude, the ability, the habit of these mundane affairs! These appeal to the senses; they are tangible, visible; they are earthly pursuits.

But, what of the heavenly sciences? What of the attainment of our end, the giving glory to God here and hereafter? *For this* was I created; for this alone. My energies should be turned primarily

in this direction. It is the whole reason of my existence and the very "world-plan" of God which was solemnly announced by the Angels at Bethlehem:

"*Glory be to God in the highest;*
"and peace on earth to men of good will" (Luke ii 14).

Our Divine Guide Himself tells us to—

"seek first the kingdom of God and His justice," and then, that
"all these other things will be added unto us" (Luke xii 31).

Given, then, that, having been baptised, we find our fig-tree, the soul, nurtured in the garden of the Church in the midst of the burning sands of this world—in a word, that we have the faith—what could be more efficacious or more refreshing than the wonderful means that God has left us—the Blessed Eucharist as a Sacrifice and as a Sacrament—to attain our end?

Let us strive ever to intensify our respect and esteem, our *affection*, for this wondrous offering which it is our privilege to make to our Creator. It is the greatest act man can perform, the presentation anew of what took place on Calvary, on our humble Altars.

Had we not grown so familiar with this "wonder of wonders" we should be thunderstruck at its sublimity. For its grandeur is akin to that of the Incarnation.

How could God become united to *our* nature, and that, in One Person? Though we know not "how," we believe that He did so. How could He choose not only the *way* of the Cross, but the death of the Cross, and that to lead to eternal Life?

What enigmas! "Deep calleth upon deep."

Every earnest Christian has abundant proof that Jesus Christ has done all this, and knows that the "highway of the Cross" is the only way to *true life*.

"And He said to all:
"If any man will come after Me,
"let him deny himself,
"and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"
(Luke ix 23).

But, what human mind could have foreseen, or even surmised, that, after devising this plan of showing us His love, He should still continue to offer Himself as a Holocaust, and at the same time leave us His own Body and Blood for the sustenance of our souls?

Since the Mass is a "showing forth of the Lord's death," in which Christ continues for us His immolation of Calvary, in it, and through it, the Father will, surely, give ear to our earnest petitions so closely united with those of His Son in our regard!

Had we been present on Calvary with our Lady and St John, God, we feel, would have granted us any reasonable request. With the like faith we shall be equally heard at Mass.

Let us come to it, then, with the sentiments of the penitent thief whose humble request was so readily conceded. It is through the Mass—this second Calvary—that Christ dispenses His richest favours.

His life and death tended only toward one object: *to glorify His Father by saving souls.* For souls, He "dwelt amongst us": for souls, He endured His Agony and Passion: He is still the same Lover of souls in the Eucharist, and for their salvation, He comes down daily upon a thousand Altars.

The average Catholic is too often ignorant of the Church's Liturgy, enshrining, as it does, such a wealth of Catholic doctrine, and surrounding the "Jewel of her Sacrifice" with a setting of priceless pearls.

"To one who lives with the sacred Liturgy, it tells a thousand things which the stranger does not learn. Like a bride, the Liturgy reveals her deepest secret only to her beloved. But even to him she does not confide it at once in all its clarity and depth. The privilege of constantly discovering new excellences awakens the happy consciousness that the deepest depths have not been sounded and cannot be fathomed. . . . Its supernatural appeal never fails to win and hold the attachment of a soul imbued with the faith" (Fr. Kramp, S.J.).

As the Mass, then, is the *living memorial* of all the mysteries of the life of her Spouse, and principally of His death—*O memoriale mortis Domini*—one of the chief aims of the Church in her Liturgy is to place *and keep* the memory of Christ before

the minds of the faithful. For this purpose she has so arranged her ecclesiastical year that each part of it in turn may represent Him to us in one or other of the various stages of His life on earth.

The Advent pictures our Redeemer's coming:

Christmas, His appearance amongst us:

The Epiphany shows Him to us as our King—Christ "The King."

The Lenten Season portrays Him in His conflict with sin and the powers of darkness:

Easter places before us His victory:

His Ascension is His triumphant return to, and union with, His Father, and with the Holy Ghost Whom He sends at Pentecost.

In the weeks after Pentecost, we rest, as it were, in contemplation of Christ's great achievements in our regard, till the following Advent, when the cycle is again commenced.

And, not only does the general division of the year bring our Divine Model ever anew before us, but at Mass the Church holds Him up to us by the daily commemoration of her Saints, who are the faithful images of Christ, for in them we see our Redeemer, reflected as in so many mirrors. Of these, our Blessed Lady was the chief, earning for herself the title of "Mirror of Justice."

This idea is emphasised in the last of the major feasts of the year—the Feast of All Saints—which, like a rainbow, reflects the effulgence of the Glory of our Redeemer—the Central Sun and Source of all beauty, and the splendour of God's glory.

Moreover, the Liturgy of the Mass is a veritable repetition of the Life of Christ. The prayers at the foot of the Altar mark the world without Christ and a seeking after Him by penance and contrition.

The Gloria shows us the Child Jesus:

The Epistle and Gospel represent Him as our Teacher:

The Offertory, our Lord's Life of Sacrifice:

The Consecration, His Death on Calvary:

The Liturgical act of "breaking the Bread," His Immolation:

The "co-mingling" the Sacred Species in the Chalice, the Resurrection:

The Communion, the Ascension and our union with the Risen Saviour: and

The Last Blessing, Christ's final Blessing on Mount Olivet.

It might, then, be truly said that the Mass is an epitome of the Life of Christ on earth. For, in it, briefly:

The *Incarnation* is re-enacted.

Our Lady offered herself to be the instrument to bring the Son of God in human life into the world. So, the priest is the instrument to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of this same Son of God.

Our Lord's *Birth* is, likewise, shown in the Holy Mass.

For, since Christ derived His Sacred Humanity wholly through Mary, so now He appears on our

Altars in His human nature, though veiled, by means of the words of the priest, who, by the sacred character of the priesthood, then holds in his hands the same Christ as did St Joseph; carries Him about, and shows Him to the people as Joseph did to the shepherds; raises Him up and offers Him to the Eternal Father as Simeon in the Temple; and, in a word, adores Him, loves Him and *lives for Him* as Mary in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

Christ's *Passion*, *Resurrection* and *Ascension* are also re-enacted during the Holy Sacrifice, though not in an equal degree.

And in this way His whole life on earth is, as it were, "lived" again and unfolded before our gaze in a realistic manner, and one calculated to move us to love and imitation.

Hence, "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we make Thee in memory of the Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost," was an older and fuller form of the prayer now in use immediately after the Lavabo (*Idée du Sacerdoce*, p. 319).

One would require the power of thought of a Seraph to comprehend and realise, and the lips of an Isaias cleansed with a burning coal, to be able to express, all that the Holy Sacrifice contains: for no mortal mind in its present state may expect to understand all that this wonderful Gift of God comprises.

The Mass is not only the Sacrifice of the Christian

worship, it is also the greatest sign of the unity of the Church, and its guarantee. It is, likewise, the strongest bond of charity between the pastors and the faithful.

The Holy Sacrifice transcends all other devotional exercises in the Church. The Rosary is a beautiful and consoling devotion, but, whilst in it one *meditates* on the Mysteries of Christ's Life and on other Mysteries linked with it, in the Mass we do not merely meditate upon, but in very deed re-enact the Sacrifice of the Cross.

In the name of the faithful, the priest, as it were, holds the Chalice to catch the drops of Christ's Sacred Blood shed in the Passion, solemnising a mystery that is at once Sacramental, Sacrificial and Sanctifying.

We read in à Kempis the following words put on the lips of Christ: "As I willingly offered Myself to God, My Father, for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the Cross, and My Body naked, so that nothing remained in Me, which was not turned into a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath, even so must thou willingly *offer thyself to Me daily* in the Mass, for a pure and holy oblation, together with thy powers and affections as heartily as thou art able" (Chapter iv, 8).

It will be surely helpful if, in imitation of our Redeemer, we too have the intention of offering not merely our daily, individual acts—prayers, work, suffering, recreation, sleep, etc.—"presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto

God" (Rom. xii 1); but that we further intend them to form *one grand whole* as a complete oblation of ourselves to our Creator!

With such a ruling resolution definitely fixed before our minds, what help shall we not gain from the frequent, and if possible daily, offering of the Holy Sacrifice of our Altars! How we shall be buoyed up in our difficulties and trials! It will be given to us to see in them only God's will. We shall get the grace to *accept* them and to say willingly our "Deo gratias"—thanks be to God—for each of them.

How, too, could we better conform to our Lord's own injunction, to

"take up our cross daily and follow Him" (Luke ix 23)?

All this is, surely, the goal of God's immediate designs in our regard. Are we not to become "other Christs" before passing to our life in eternity?

In the Last Gospel at Mass we read, almost daily:

"But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the *sons of God*" (John i 12). Was it in some fanciful way that God intended us to become His sons?

And again in St John:

"Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and *should be*, *the sons of God* . . ." (1 John iii 1).

This sonship we received at our Baptism through the Redemption. It is a truly wonderful gift,

whereby we are born into quite a new and a higher, because supernatural, life.

And what better or more effective means have we of strengthening the union effected by this regeneration, than the means that Christ in His love has left us, His dying legacy, the Holy Mass, and through it the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar ?

The daily offering of the Mass would give us, as it were, a good start to begin our round of duties, and urge us to an unbroken offering, as far as may be, of our every act to God.

The very house, or office, in which we live or spend the day can become for us a temple; the desk, the counter, or work-table at which we are occupied, can be as an altar whereon to make repeated offerings to the Holy Trinity. We need not wait till we are formally at Mass or at our prayers to be in touch with our Divine Guest of Holy Communion. Each time he deigns to " dwell within us " corporally, He will more and more stabilise His occupation of our souls as the Word of God, and with Him the Holy Trinity comes to abide as in a chosen shrine.

What, then, seems so to blunt our spirit of faith that we do not far oftener recur to this presence of such a Guest so near to us ? Was it not primarily for this very " indwelling " in us that the Word left us His flesh to be our food ?

Just as Christ did not come on earth for the sake only of His Apostles and the chosen few with whom He lived in human form, but that He might dwell—literally, indwell—in the hearts of all mankind; so, neither is it for the few fleeting minutes we possess

Him corporally after Communion, that He left us His Body and Blood, but rather that He might take possession of the hearts of all, and, in no mere metaphorical sense, *abide* as the Second Person of God, together with the other two Persons of the Adorable Trinity, in our souls.

Alas! how few seem to pause sufficiently in order to realise that the Holy Trinity dwells within them!

That we may the more readily grasp this truth, the best means we have at hand is that of Holy Mass and Communion. Let us lay store on making our lives *one long sacrifice*, in imitation of that of our Elder Brother Jesus Christ, God's Exemplar to us; and thus, whilst being wonderfully supported by the recollection of God's presence in us, we shall ever be adding to the completeness of our self-immolation, to be consummated at our death.

One could desire that this were the general aim and practice of all the faithful. But how many Catholics, alas! seem to act as if they were sorry to have to go to Mass at all, even once a week!

Yet, what a little the Church demands of her children! That, out of the seven times forty-eight half-hours in the week, they devote *one* only, each week, to the offering of the Holy Sacrifice.

To those who understand, is it not a subject of grief that the Church has had to make attendance at Mass on Sundays and certain Festivals a matter of strict obligation?

If, from what is here said, a few understand better the ineffable privilege that is theirs in offering the

Holy Sacrifice, the labour of writing this short volume will not have been in vain.

But, why should we not all bind ourselves to become "apostles of the Mass," souls imbued with the greatness of our prerogative; who yearn to do our best to spread the "Good Tidings," and to help others to appreciate and realise better the excellence and sublimity of this priceless Oblation ?

CHAPTER II

THE SUBLIMITY OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

"To the only God our Saviour
"Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
"Be glory and magnificence, empire and power,
"Before all ages, and now, and for all ages of ages. Amen."
(*Jude* i 25.)

THE Catholic Church, instituted by Jesus Christ, is the effective instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of mankind. And amongst the means which the Church has at her disposal for attaining this sublime end, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass holds the highest place. It is a memorial Sacrifice in which, as she tells us, the work of Redemption is carried on.

Through the Mass we not only render due honour and glory to our Maker, but apply to fallen man the blessings of the Redemption. It is, says a spiritual writer quoted by P. Plus, S.J., "the greatest event in the history of mankind . . . the repetition of the decisive hour when our sinful and justly disinherited earth journeyed suddenly forth towards the fulness of supernatural life."

As the Christian Religion has its roots in the Sacrifice of the Cross, which, in its turn, gives its efficacy to the Eucharistic Sacrifice, this, then, becomes the very centre, the heart and soul, of

divine worship in the Church (a worship that is soulful and dignified in every feature), and also the centre whence God's graces are dispensed to us on earth.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, God reserved to Himself the right to institute a form of sacrifice. It was Jesus Christ who gave us in the Mass the way of honouring our Creator: and by His earnest appeal at the last Supper—

"Do this for a Commemoration of Me"—

He manifested how urgently He desired us to continue this Oblation of Himself. These facts alone are enough to recommend the Mass and indicate its sublimity and excellence.

The Eucharist as a Sacrifice is God's unique and most transcendent gift to man, containing as it does a sort of summary of divine worship. For it is through the Mass that we

Adore, honour and glorify God in the highest way:
Thank Him best for His favours:
Atone for our misdeeds: and
Petition Him to satisfy our many needs.

All this it does in the most efficacious manner possible.

Hence the *four ends* for which the Holy Sacrifice is offered.

This wonderful Oblation is something beyond the prayer of the human soul, and excels in value and

dignity, in power and efficacy, all the prayers of the faithful, or even of the Church itself.

Not all the united choirs of earth, not the Nine Choirs of the Angels, can praise God as ravishingly as is done by the offering of one Mass—be the surroundings ever so lowly.

The Mass is Christ's dower to the Church—the bride of His choice, robed in her bridal dress and ornaments, all beautiful and without spot or wrinkle. He has endowed her with perpetual youth, and in her loveliness she rejoices to go up to the Altar, to renew her vows to her Beloved.

The Mass is the "rising sun of grace"; it is the "fountain head" of all the blessings of the Redemption, which are applied to us through the seven streams of the Sacraments.

It is the soul and the life of the entire worship of the Church; it illuminates all her sacred celebrations and is the heart that gives pulsation to all that is grandest in her Ritual.

What the sun in the heavens is to all nature, the Holy Mass is to us pilgrims on earth. It is the centre around which our lives revolve: a "celestial sun," which enlightens and fertilises them, and brings their fruit to maturity.

The Mass is as the falling of the manna. It *is* The Manna, and that of which the manna of old was but the figure and type. The Old Law, St Paul tells us, contained but the . . .

" shadow of the good things to come " (Heb. x 1);
and merely
" the patterns of the True " (Heb. ix 24).

It is through the Mass, too, that we are able to supply what is wanting to us; to praise, reverence and serve our Creator worthily; to repair our losses and to satisfy the Divine Justice for our transgressions.

Man has ever recognised his heavy debt to His Maker. Hence, he has exhausted his resources of wealth, of mind and power, in raising up cathedrals and churches, material dwellings, for his God, as fitting as it is possible for his genius to contrive.

The very best in adornment that man can effect—in beauty of shrine and temple, in the Altars, in the sacred vessels and vestments, together with incense, lights and flowers—has been called into requisition to honour God fitly in the Holy Mass, and to provide for Christ, His sacramental home and life.

For the decoration of our Altars the soil provides its wealth of fragrant flowers; the forests their balm and sweet-smelling incense; the ocean its pearls; whilst the earth itself yields up its gold and precious stones.

" The sentiments of Christendom and its reason have blossomed into art and science, into architecture, sculpture and painting, to house in Christian temples the highest object which it is man's privilege to worship, and worshipping to lodge worthily on earth. Divine service in gorgeous temples has been

to eager souls like a golden vase replenished by God with the joy of his grace: 'Drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved' (Cant. v 1)" (*Talks on Truth*, Fr. T. Hughes, S.J.).

Father Faber styles the Holy Sacrifice "the most beautiful thing this side of heaven."

We read that God, speaking of the temple raised in His honour, said to Solomon:

"My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayers of him that shall pray in this place.

"For I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that My name may be there for ever, and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually" (2 Paral. vii 15, 16).

With how much greater force do not these words apply to our temples in which, not the blood of oxen and rams is offered, but, in very truth, the Precious Blood of His Divine Son!

For, on our Altars a memorial of all Christ's Life is presented before us. Our churches surpass in sacredness the grotto of Bethlehem, the house of Nazareth, or even Calvary's Mount. It would seem that greater graces are poured out in them than were granted during Christ's life amongst men.

". . . He that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he shall do;
"and greater than these shall he do" (John xiv 12).

At the baptismal font we receive a new birth; in the confessional souls are healed of every malady,

nay, the dead are brought to life again; whilst at the Altar Christ's own Body and Blood become the sustenance of our souls! Hence, we say with the Psalmist:

"O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house;
"and the place where Thy glory dwelleth"
(Ps. xxv 8).

What an inspiration we have in the cathedrals of the Old World! Every line in their architecture is devised to guide the eye to the Altar, where the sacrificial Act takes place. How awed we are on entering them! They are the houses of worship of our God, the "roof-tree" for the Altar and for the Tabernacle. They are not mere halls for prayer, assembly rooms . . . but, the temples of God, habitations wherein the Most High is fitly worshipped.

All this is the glorious tribute of the faithful in general to God, the inspiration of the Church as a whole. But, what is each of us doing for the Church as individuals? Not of stones and cement is the Church composed, but of *living stones*. Let us bear this in mind, and in addition, prepare our bodies that they may become *living temples* of the Holy Ghost, in which the Blessed Trinity Itself may deign to abide.

"You are a temple," says Mgr. Gay;
"Put *things* in the porch, *men* in the nave, but . . .
"*keep the sanctuary for God*."

Then indeed should we realise God's promise:

" I will set My tabernacle in the midst of you, . . .
" I will walk among you, and will be your God,
" and you shall be My people " (Lev. xxvi 12).

Everything in the life of a good Catholic centres round the Holy Mass. It is the loadstone of our existence, the focus about which everything of importance for us turns. The Altar should be as the very hearth of our homes around which the family love to assemble and to *live their lives*.

It is about this " fireside " that we gather to receive six of the seven Sacraments. Most of the rites and blessings of the Church—the mystical Spouse of Christ—are connected with the Holy Sacrifice.

Minor Orders are conferred on the young Levite, as also the Major Orders, and Ordination to the priesthood—during the Mass. The Consecration of Bishops, the anointing of Kings and the Coronation of the Holy Father, take place in the course of the Holy Sacrifice.

Baptismal water on the eve of Pentecost, the Holy Oils on Holy Thursday; the blessing of candles, ashes and palms are all ceremonies connected with the august Oblation made on our Altars.

At Mass heaven seems less distant. We too often meet with distractions in our daily prayer, or at least find it difficult to keep our thoughts on God; He seems far away. But, at Mass our attention is more consecrated and there is a warmth of devotion that nothing else can arouse.

"In the Mass," as Bishop Hedley says, "God is marvellously near, for it is the moment of His nearest approach."

All that is spiritual hovers about the Tabernacle, the Altar, the Holy Sacrifice.

What a source of holy thoughts is the Mass! Refreshing thoughts, comforting thoughts, thoughts that raise us up in dejection, strengthen us in our warfare with the world, the flesh and the devil, that brighten our outlook in life and therefore our lives themselves, on our road to eternity.

What a dreary prospect for us on earth were the Holy Sacrifice suppressed; and, consequently, what a barren waste our souls would be! We should truly be dwelling, as the Prophet says:

> "in dryness in the desert in a salt land, and not inhabited" (Jer. xvii 6).

At the Altar, and especially during the Holy Mass, all the rays of truth, of grace, and of love meet as in a focus; thence comes our spirit of prayer. We Catholics, and particularly perhaps those in any way specially consecrated to God, feel and understand this, and wonder how those outside the fold are able to battle through life without such helpful aid!

How distressing the reflection, that Heaven's chiefest boon to mankind has been refused and rejected as superstition, by many who are not in communion with the Church and yet profess to follow Christ!

Sacrifice of some kind seems to have been offered by all peoples from the beginning; it would seem to be the secret impetus, a kind of remnant of the impulse, to give supreme honour to the Deity, that man received before the Fall, and consequently rather divine than human.

Hence, minute details for offering sacrifice were dictated by God to His Chosen People in the Old Testament; and in the New, it was our Lord Himself Who prescribed for us the essentials of Sacrifice.

Yet, this is the one thing that those outside have discarded! It is the "Rock of Salvation" for us; our "Anchor of hope."

Those without the Fold have cut away from this safe mooring, and are unfortunately drifting about . . .

> "Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. iv 14).

For us, however, the stream of Salvation rushes along as a torrent from this wonderful Source. We are those whom St John describes when he says:

> "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne,
> "shall rule them, and
> "shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life,
> "and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Apoc. vii 17).

In an especial way, it is through the Mass, too, that we ask, as our Lord recommended us, *in His*

name for what we need for soul and body; and are encouraged to hope to have our petitions granted.

If there be one all-absorbing desire that possesses us during this our pilgrimage through life, it is that, at the close, *we may be among the saved*. Without a special revelation, however, we are told, no one is sure of final perseverance. Still, relying with every confidence on the promises of God Himself, the certainty of our one day enjoying eternal bliss becomes almost absolute. . . .

"Amen, amen I say to you," we have from the lips of Christ,
"If you ask the Father anything in My name,
"He will give it you" (John xvi 23).

Now, it is certainly *in, and by, and through the Holy Mass* that we most of all petition the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ. For in it our prayers, or rather—and this is all-important—the prayers of the Church, are, as it were, sprinkled with the Precious Blood of our Redeemer and truest Friend, inasmuch as they are all evoked in His name. Nay! He is Himself the Petitioner.

Witness the earnestness of her appeal to this end in the following prayers, amongst others, at some of the more solemn parts of the Mass-rite:

At the offering of the Host:

"*. . . that it may avail both me and them unto life everlasting.*"

At the oblation of the Chalice:

". . . *that it* (the Chalice of salvation) *may ascend before Thy Divine Majesty, as a sweet odour for our salvation.*"

As the celebrant spreads his hands over the offerings—immediately before the Consecration:

"*command that we be delivered from eternal damnation,*
"*and numbered in the flock of Thy elect.*"

Again, on letting fall a particle of the Sacred Host into the Chalice of Christ's Blood:

"*May this mingling . . . of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*
"*avail us that receive It unto life everlasting.*"

Lastly, in giving Communion, the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the Sacred Host and says to each:

"*May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ* keep guard *over your soul unto life everlasting.*"

From these passages alone, what a consoling assurance has every earnest Catholic of his final perseverance! We seem to say to God with unbounded confidence:

"Behold, O God, our Protector:
"and look upon the face of Thy Christ!" (Ps. lxxxiii 10).

We cannot better assist our brethren, our friends, our relatives, our enemies, than by offering for them

the Holy Sacrifice. And with regard to the Souls in Purgatory, the Council of Trent declares:

"The Souls detained in Purgatory are helped by the prayers and good works of the faithful, but especially by the acceptable Sacrifice of the Altar" (*potissimum vero acceptabili altaris sacrificio juvari*) (Sess. xxv).

The Mass is, then, a perennial fountain of graces and blessings for ourselves and others, for the living, and for the Departed.

Moreover, how elevated in tone and full of unction are the prayers used at Mass! How sacred the rites used in its celebration! How free from all that is base or commonplace! The prayers and ceremonies are especially stirring when, as in the solemn high Mass, they are supplemented by the Mass music of the great composers.

We should bear in mind in coming to Mass that we are really "offerers" of the august Sacrifice, and not merely "onlookers," as we should be, were we at a Lecture, or at an Entertainment.

No! On entering the place of Sacrifice, all take on, in a certain sense, a kind of priesthood, with power to *offer* the Victim of the Sacrifice.

All become co-offerers—joint celebrants—with the priest, and even with Jesus Christ, so closely do we enter into this greatest Act of the virtue of Religion; though, it is only the ordained priest that actually *sacrifices*.

If St Peter, addressing the Early Christians, said of them:

"Ye are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood*, "a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet. ii 9),

meaning that through Baptism and Confirmation they were made priests to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on the altar of their hearts, with how much greater reason may we not understand the Apostle's words as said of the faithful when they offer the Mass, . . . looking upon themselves, with Christ, as victims of the Sacrifice?

"The oblation of the just man maketh the altar fat, "and is an odour of sweetness in the sight of the Most High" (Ecclus. xxxv 8).

We need scarcely remark that the priest himself is not the principal offerer. Christ has reserved this to Himself, for He is continuing His Oblation of Calvary.

At the "Offertory" the celebrant, turning to the congregation, says:

"*Orate fratres*. . . ." That is, "*Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice* and yours *may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.*"

These words show unmistakably that the Church wishes the layfolk to take *an active share* in this sacrificial offering which is the culminating point of her Liturgy.

The same idea is reiterated by the celebrant in the prayers both before and after the Consecration:

". . . *who* (*the faithful*), *themselves*, *offer to Thee this Sacrifice of praise*. . . ."

" *We therefore beseech Thee, O Lord,*
" *graciously to accept this Oblation of our* (*the clergy's*) *service,*
" *as also of Thy whole household* (*the faithful*)."

And again:

" *Wherefore, we Thy servants* (*the clergy*),
" *as also Thy holy people* (*the faithful*),
" offer *unto Thy most excellent Majesty of Thy Gifts* . . . " etc.

In this connection, it is striking to note the number of times in the celebration of the Mass that the word " we " is used.

" We *beseech Thee, O Lord.* . . ."
" We *offer the Chalice of salvation.* . . ."
" *May* we *be received by Thee.* . . ."
" *which* we *believe of Thy glory* . . ." etc.

This " we " includes, firstly, our Lord Himself, then the celebrant with the sacred ministers, next the servers, and lastly the laity, especially those who are actually assisting.

This little book is written largely to bring home to the Catholic laity that the Mass is *for them:* that it is THEIRS: and consequently something into which *they should intelligently enter*, almost as though it would lack an integral part without their active co-operation.

Could we but realise the fact that *we each assume a kind of priesthood* when about to offer Mass, it

would help us to focus our attention on the wonderful mysteries that it contains and to perform this sublime office with more abundant fruit for ourselves and for others, as well as with increased glory to God. St Chrysostom calls this, for the layfolk, "an Angelic office."

"To isolate oneself from what the priest does during the Sacrifice, to give oneself up to some private devotion or reading, is to have not the least idea of Christian worship. The Mass ought to be the true devotion of the faithful; it is *their oblation*, *their sacrifice;* they are united with the priest who prays and who offers the holy Victim for them; or rather they are united with Christ; they are assisting at the Last Supper with the Apostles: they hear our Lord pronounce the sacred words: "This is My Body, this is My Blood;" they receive this Body and Blood; they are present on Calvary, and receive the price of their Redemption. In a certain sense they lose their individuality for the time being, and are more than ever members of the Catholic, universal Church, that body of which Jesus Christ is the Head" (Cabrol, *Liturgical Prayer*, p. 321).

By and in the Mass the Church is best enabled to honour the Saints on earth, her heroes and heroines in Sanctity—the highest of all achievements possible to man. Their memories, and perhaps the memory of Christ's own Sacrifice, might long since have perished, or at least become dimmed, but for the perennial celebration of the Mysteries of the Altar.

The Mass is the source and fount of much of our Catholic literature; the hearth of our Liturgy and centre of our Christian life.

In his Encyclical on the establishment of the "Feast of Christ the King," his Holiness Pope Pius XI writes:

"Teaching has its greatest influence on the mind, but the Liturgy moves with salutary effect both body and soul; for man, composed of body and soul, is stirred by external solemnities to a fuller acceptance of the Divine Teaching through the variety and beauty of the Sacred rites."

"The Divine Office—a very sacred thing—gravitates round the Mass: the Canonical Hours thus become, as it were, its satellites."

"It may be truly said that the Mass is like the grain of mustard seed, whence has sprung the whole of Catholic Liturgy; it has thrown out branches on every side, and has become a great tree in whose shade the birds of heaven come to rest" (Cabrol, *Liturgical Prayer*).

On Sundays and Holidays of the Church, observe the people in all climes, in sunshine and shower, old and young—perhaps poorly clad and barefooted—wending their way devoutly to the church, the haven of peace and rest in the parish.

A stranger in the parish, whether it be in the city or a hamlet, has little difficulty on Sunday mornings in finding the church or chapel. Almost all astir will be wending their way there, "going to Mass."

The Sacrifice of the Mass is the same everywhere, and it matters not whether it be celebrated in a stately minster or in a humble shrine; in a garret, or in the open air on the hillside; or, again, in the catacombs, as was often the case in the Early Church.

It is the yearning to honour and be united with God—and that, through the Passion of our Blessed Redeemer—that is the attraction. The sacred Passion never grows old. It is ever with us, in the Mass and in the Sacraments.

"It is the Mass that matters!"

How thoughtful the people are, going to the church or to their wayside chapel! How recollected when present at the Holy Mysteries!

What else on earth can exercise such a wholesome influence?

All this, too, takes place in the morning—often the early morning; that blessed time for prayer, when the mind is fresh and the soul calm and collected. And thus in very deed are fulfilled the words of the Psalmist:

"I anticipated the dawning of the day, and cried out:
"because in Thy words I very much hoped.
"My eyes to Thee have forestalled the morning:
"that I might meditate on Thy words" (Ps. cxviii 147, 148).
"Hearken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God, . . .
"O Lord, in the morning I will stand before Thee . . ." (Ps. v 3, 5).

"The morning stars praise Him," says holy Job: "*and the sons of God* make a joyful melody" (Job xxxviii 7).

Lastly, what a comfort is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to the priest himself! What consolation he receives from it, and firm support! Like Jacob, he too, has been—

"established with corn and wine" (Gen. xxvii 37).

What strength in his trials, in his arduous work, and laborious life!

The earnest priest sighs for the moment of the Holy Sacrifice. For him, every day is a "Holiday of obligation"; the yoke is thus made sweet and the burden light. Each day is for him a 25th of March, a Christmas Day, a Good Friday, an Easter Day, through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

What time is more favourable or fruitful for himself—the "form of his flock"—to become spiritually strong, and thus enabled to lead the flock to the more abundant pastures, than this time of special grace? It is during the Mass that he feels most drawn to the love of Christ his Master and Model. And, where love is, prayer becomes a joy. These are inseparables. Like the sun, love lights up his way and warms the chilling atmosphere in which he has so often to live.

It is through the salutary influence of the Holy sacrifice that he prepares himself to become a fit instrument in his Master's hands, to kindle and spread the fire of God's love in all hearts.

Being mindful of the words of Christ addressed to him by the Bishop at his Ordination: "I will not now call you servants, but My friends, because you have known all things that I have done in the midst of you:" the good priest recognises that he has been specially chosen from among the people to represent his Master on earth, and particularly at the Altar.

How spotless should be his life to worthily fulfil his sacred calling! In Malachy ii 7, the priest is called the "Angel of the Lord of Hosts."

Just as God has Angels to minister to Him in heaven, unceasingly adoring Him and repeating His praises in holy emulation—Sanctus: Sanctus: Sanctus—so He would have also ministering spirits . . . *human angels* . . . on earth, to waft to Him our offerings both in sacrifice and in prayer, which, like fragrant incense, may circle round the great white Throne in an odour of sweetness.

It is the role of the ordained priest to fulfil both of these functions for mankind, for men are often so engrossed in worldly pursuits, as not to permit themselves the time sufficient to attend to this *their chief business in life*.

Hence, as St Chrysostom says, "having been preferred to Angels for this glorious ministry—of sacrifice and of intercession—the priest should lead a life more Angelic than human."

St Laurence Justinian tells him he should "approach the Altar as if he were Jesus Christ Himself; assist at it as an Angel; and minister there as if he were a Saint."

Only in heaven will the fervent priest learn of the happiness of which he has been the unconscious occasion, to possibly countless souls, for eternity. For this, not only will these souls be for ever grateful to him, but his Divine Master will ever treat him as a creditor to whom He owes much.

The priest does not ask for any special manifestation of his Chief's presence at Mass. His faith would not be stronger for such a favour. He knows Christ is there; he never wavers in this belief. Like Peter, he says:

"Thou hast the words of eternal Life" (John vi 69): and will trust on, till faith yields to vision in eternity.

CHAPTER III

THOUGHTS CONNECTED WITH CHRIST'S OBLATION

" He fed them with the fat of wheat,
" Alleluia:
" and filled them with honey out of the Rock;
" Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"
(" *Introit" of the Mass for Corpus Christi*.)

To every thinking Catholic it is not a matter for surprise that there is nothing more august, nor more wonderful in the Church than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Was it not virtually the object of the sighs of the people of Old for thousands of years? Was not Christ, together with the Oblation which He was going to make of Himself, prefigured in the Old Testament and foretold by the Prophets?

Did not the Israelites yearn for their Redemption through the long ages of waiting? Was not their life a continual captivity, typified by the bondage in Egypt and in Babylon?

Were they not slaves to the common enemies of our race—the world, the flesh and the devil—with so few helps to overcome them?

How great then is our privilege, to be of those of the eleventh hour, as it were, when " expectancy has given way to reality "!

The subject, however, for astonishment is rather that, now that the prophecies have been fulfilled, and that we *actually possess* the "Desired of the Eternal Hills"—now that our "Emmanuel" *is* with us!—we still give Him such a poor welcome, imitating, alas! too closely, the people of Bethlehem, on His first appearance amongst men.

By how many is He not still elbowed out? And how few give Him the reception that they might and should! These do not recognise, much less realise, the graces and blessings that are at their very doors.

Let us, however, endeavour to acknowledge and appreciate the blessings that are ours through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and present ourselves with joy at this "fountain head," there to draw "living waters."

Side by side with the renewal of the Sacrifice of His mortal Body, Christ would make the offering of His mystical body throughout all time as a sweet odour before the Father.

Now, we are the members of His Church, that is, of His mystical body. As often, then, as the Holy Sacrifice is offered to and accepted by the Father, so often are we made part of the sacrificial gifts, and in this way we are enabled to fulfil, in part at least, the yearning of our hearts to give ourselves to our Creator. Unlike the sacrifices of the Old Law, our symbolic gifts become united with the human nature of the God-man, through whom, alone, all graces and blessings come to us.

Innate in us lies deep a vague longing to be united with our Maker; we want Him to take notice of us; we sigh for His complacent regard and feel urged to *give Him something*. And after gifts have been offered on either side, and accepted by each, we would honour our greatest Friend, as men are wont to do amongst themselves, by inviting Him to deign to sit at table and sup with us as our Guest of honour.

This we feel is our best way of conveying our esteem and regard for the object of our yearning, and of thus honouring Him in the highest manner possible to man. Not for their own value do we proffer the elements—bread and wine—of the Sacrifice, for God, to whom all things in heaven and earth belong, needs not our material gifts. "I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods" (Psalm xv 2).

The gifts are given with a view to their being converted into the Body and Blood of Christ, as also to serve as a symbol of ourselves. By their presentation we intend to convey to our Maker that we, ourselves, belong to Him, giving thereby a testimony of our submission to, reverence, and regard for Him—to honour His transcendent excellence.

Knowing this craving of our souls, our Divine Lord supplied us with the means to satisfy it as much as it may be in this life, choosing, after the manner of the sacrifice of Melchisedech, bread and wine for His own and our Oblation.

These two products, perhaps best of all, represent and personify the fruits of our earth; they are the

wealth of its fecundity. They may be called the "marrow and blood" of the earth, and as such are the source, or means, whereby man best renews his vigour of body, and have been chosen by our Lord to be used as instruments for the renewing of his vigour of soul.

It may not be out of place here to note that neither wheat nor the vine will grow "wild"; they both require careful cultivation, and are profitable to man only by the "sweat of his brow." And, even after the harvesting, they are prepared for food and drink, only when much labour and skill have been expended on them. And, just as the bread is made of flour ground from a host of grains of wheat, and the wine pressed from many grapes, so are we to consider ourselves as uniting with our fellow men, *in supernatural love*, to compose Christ's mystical body, rather than as individuals with self, almost wholly, in view. The Love-feast in which we join in union—communion—at the sanctuary rails enhances this idea of union in charity.

And since the flour becomes bread, only when kneaded and baked, and the grapes become wine, only when trodden out of all recognition in the wine-press, so also we become as another and purer substance, when, having rid ourselves as much as may be of that mean thing, *self*, we are threshed, sifted and crushed in the oil-press—our Gethsemane of trial—with Christ.

On the night of his last Supper, Christ offered Himself wholly, to be a Victim for the salvation of mankind. This oblation was consummated the

following day on the Cross of Calvary—the world's Altar, and first in Christendom.

It was on the first Holy Thursday evening that the sacred Rite of the Mass was inaugurated and solemnly instituted by our loving Master when He so earnestly appealed to us to

"DO THIS FOR A COMMEMORATION OF ME."

The Church has carried out this dying injunction through the centuries since that night, and will continue to fulfil the same loving precept of the Bridegroom till time shall be no more.

In this wonderful Sacrifice of the New Dispensation, we know from the Council of Trent, there is the same Victim, the same Offerer, and the same object as in the first Mass on the eve of Christ's Passion, and as at the Crucifixion on the morrow.

Our Redeemer still retains the sacrificial consecration of Calvary, that priceless dedication of the surrender of Himself to His eternal Father which He once for all made on the Cross.

Consequently, when He comes on our Altars at the words of His minister, He is present as the sacrificial gift or Victim of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and that, in His glorified state.

Our Divine Victim of the Mass is no longer actually slain, is no longer "plighted to death." He is rather the "Source of Life," of Life in its highest meaning.

Indeed, the Christ of the Eucharistic Sacrifice

has ever been and will for ever subsist as a Victim and Holocaust in the Bosom of the Father, consumed by the fire of His love, as well as by the burning fire of the Holy Spirit Who is the reciprocal love of the Father and of the Son.

The Victim, then, is the same in both Sacrifices, and consequently the Sacrifice of the Mass renews the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is, however, the *act* whereby Christ then offered Himself that is renewed, not the *manner*. "*Ratio offerendi diversa*" (Trent, Sess. xxii, cap. 2).

In the Supper Room, the Victim was offered to be slain: we now offer the same Victim already slain. . . .

> "And I saw," says St John, "a lamb as it were slain" (Apoc. v 6).

Our consecration, then, brings our Lord from heaven, as the ultimate sacrificial gift, to our lowly Altars. He continues now, in His state of Victim of Old, deigning to permit His priests to present anew the Oblation which He made of Himself to His heavenly Father on Calvary.

Hence, there is in our Mass the same efficacy and the same atoning power as if Christ were crucified again. And not only does He *permit* us this ineffable privilege, but He has *urged* it with instancy.

Would that one could have read the yearnings of His Sacred Heart when He so urged, or rather bade, the Apostles to offer this Sacrifice in "Memory of Him"! By the promptings of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, it was, that they first grasped the full

significance of Christ's dying wish. What a legacy He was leaving them, and us through them! And, what a perennial occasion for the deepest gratitude is not all this in the soul of every priest and of all the faithful who *do* understand!

Unlike the death, say of Lazarus, and his subsequent "coming forth" from the tomb, which are simply isolated historical facts and have little further bearing on life in this world, the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ are still, as it were, taking place in the eyes of His Eternal Father, and are therefore the object of His complacency and of our constant veneration and homage.

His life and Passion are, in this way, ever before our eyes. He *still lives* amongst us, entering into our joys, our sorrows, our very life. And the more closely we model our lives on His, in His role of Victim, patiently bearing our trials and crosses, the more shall we, too, be beloved of the Father.

Till the end of time our Divine Model will, as it were, remain on the Cross, not only in His own Person, but also, in a sense, in the person of His faithful priests and people through the medium of suffering; and, though it is difficult to realise, happy are those whom He calls upon to be so nailed to the same rough Rood.

No act is of much worth unless it be in some way connected with, or bear the stamp, the sign, of the Cross. It is the "Seal of the King," and must be honoured. It is the hall-mark of genuineness! The devastating angel must respect it.

"And the blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be" (Exod. xii 13).

Not the Apostles alone, nor those looking up at that Blood-stained Form on the Cross, were to be witnesses and sharers of His stupendous achievement. Our Lady and her companions, with St John, were not the only ones who were to gaze upon and have a part in the dereliction and death of our Redeemer. Christ's love found a way whereby *we may all look upon and share in His supreme Sacrifice.* This is realised at the solemn moments of the Consecration and the Elevation. Then we may look on, not with the eyes of the spirit alone, but also with those of the body, and thus partake of the renewal of Christ's great Offering! . . . forming part, even, of the Gift or Victim, with Him, in the Oblation.

It was at the Last Supper, rather than at the Crucifixion, that our Lord established the Rite, the astounding Liturgical Oblation, which we continue in, and call the Mass. Here it was, it may be said, that the figures of the Old Covenant were to give place to the reality.

The taking bread, the raising His eyes to heaven, the giving thanks, the blessing and breaking it, the recitation of the words with their consequent symbolical presentation of the Offering of Himself as a Victim—His Body for our food, His Blood for our Redemption "unto the remission of sins"—all this raised His act to a solemn, external, tangible *Rite*—a Rite which effected what it signified.

And, whilst it was for His Father the supreme proof of Christ's love, the "extreme of love," it was to be for us an earnest of the same love in time and in eternity.

How profound is the unity between the Sacrifice of our Altars and the Sacred Passion, both so linked with the first Mass in the Supper Room!

The Church has striven to make the identity as close as possible. The two Offerings are really but one. In the Cenacle, the actual slaying was anticipated. From that on, our Master feels Himself as the Victim finally segregated and marked out for the slaughter. Up to that moment He was His own normal Self; anxious to prove His love and eager to face the awful ordeal. . . .

"I have a baptism," He had said, "wherewith I am to be baptised:

"and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke xii 50).

And again it was:

"With desire He had desired to eat *that* Pasch before He suffered" (Luke xxii 15).

Once, however, that He becomes a Victim, He remains a Victim.

Wholly consecrated to His Father as a Victim for the ransom of fallen man, He does not complain; asks for nothing; desires nothing; wants nothing. He was now set apart, separated and dedicated, as a Victim for Sacrifice.

That strange cry that was to escape Him later that night in the Garden at the near approach of

death and at the thought of the weight of our iniquities which pressed His face to the earth, was rather the assertion of the human in Him.

His Spirit remained constant and His love triumphed; for He yearned above all to do His Father's Will.

"Not My will," He added, "but Thine be done."

From this moment, then, He is no longer free, as it were, but bound and fettered for the Sacrifice on the following day. Nevertheless—

"He was offered because it was His own will,
"and He opened not His mouth:
"He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter,
"and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer,
"and He shall not open His mouth" (Isa. liii 7).

What more beautiful than to contemplate His loving discourse to the disciples as given in St John's Gospel? Read and ponder chapters xiii to xvii.

* * * * *

Would one be incorrect in saying that the one outstanding moment of infinite satisfaction and joy in our Lord's life was that in which He sat down with the Twelve to break for them, for the first time, the Bread of Life?

Often had He prepared them for this ineffable Banquet. They had as yet only a vague idea of it; but, to Him, if we except His atoning death, it would appear to have been the one absorbing desire that stood out, humanly speaking, above every other

wish of His life. It was to be the "Triumph of His Love."

What a feeling of infinite peace came over Him now that the longed-for moment had arrived! No other human intellect, but His own, could or will grasp all He meant when He said:

"With desire have I desired to eat THIS Pasch with you."

It was with a divine, an infinite, calm that He gave them, and us through them, this wondrous gift. It was a unique moment. There had never been such another since the beginning of time.

In an abyss of sadness He noticed the fidgeting uneasiness of the traitor at the Table. Only a God could have been so unmoved! Unmoved, because of the greatness and far-reachingness of the admirable Gift He was about to bestow upon mankind. In it His love—an all-Divine love—was focussed to burning point. He would allow nothing to disturb the deep peace of His Soul.

It was no humiliation for Him to become miraculously our food. It was rather the masterpiece of all His works and miracles—second only to the Hypostatic Union of His manhood with the Word! No wonder, then, it stood out—even in His thoughts—and gave Him such peace and comfort.

The thought of it sustained Him during His life. Did He not see its effects, as His Soul looked down the ages, in so many Holy Masses and Communions till the end of time?

It was a Divine way of showing us His love; of

remaining with His chosen band and with the Church till the close; of being through the Church His earthly Spouse, the principle of true life, and the Object of the best love of all those who would believe. He was thus enabled to transfer "eternal life" to those whom the Father had given Him.

As we have said, this great Act in a sense included His Passion; for from the night of the Last Supper in an especial way He had become a Victim doomed to die. He was the Victim marked out for the slaughter, willing and accepting all the torments of His Passion, and acquiescing in all its terrors with love unspeakable.

A Brief Word on Suffering

St Paul tells us that we are destined through the Church to attain to the measure of the "fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv 13).

Though Christ is in Himself complete and perfect, still He may be said to receive a certain amplitude from us, as being members of His mystical body, the Church.

Just as the soul, though complete at its creation, yet seems to expand and give us a fuller life, greater powers of movement and sensation, of increase "in wisdom and in age," so does Christ seem to become amplified through us, exercising in us His boundless capacity for suffering and love. *Jesus living in the Priest.*

The limitations of His human Body, in place and in time, did not permit Him, without a miracle,

to put into execution all the designs of His world-plan. Hence He formed to Himself another body to satisfy the longing of His Heart to prove His love for us and for the Father. This body is the Church, of which we have the inestimable privilege of being members.

It is we, then, whom He allows to take His place here below—to suffer and to die—thus amplifying His own desire for suffering till the end of time.

To understand and then to realise this thought would be to strengthen ourselves in our crosses, to raise ourselves up in trial and ennoble our lives beyond what would be possible to our unaided selves.

It would be Christ, then, who still suffers in us. We should be helping Him to bear His heavy Cross like the Cyrenean, till we reach our own Calvary at death.

Possibly it was to a large extent this thought that sustained the Martyrs in their final sacrifice and stimulated so many of the Saints to sigh for suffering, so repugnant, humanly speaking, to our nature.

The above idea is further borne out by St Paul's openly asserting that he supplied in his body what was lacking to the Passion of Christ. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. i 24).

Let us hope, too, that, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, our own trials and sufferings will be

accepted as fulfilling the same end; becoming, with Christ Himself, in the eyes of the Eternal Father, part-victim during our lives in the offering He still continues to make of Himself at Mass.

What a wonderful privilege it is for us, to unite with the priest in impersonating Him at this ineffable Sacrifice! Speaking in His Person! In the first person! Using His words:

"THIS IS MY BODY." "THIS IS MY BLOOD."

How could we enter more closely into this great Sacrifice? And since we concur with the celebrant in his sublime role, how easy it is for us to have the intention of becoming a part-victim with Christ, and of identifying ourselves, as far as may be, with Him in this stupendous Action!

Let the holy Mass, then, be a means for us of stimulating ourselves to a willing acceptance of our crosses in life, no matter the source whence they come.

It is to the Tree of the Cross our lives must cling, like the ivy to its support. By this way do we best climb to sanctity and union. On the Cross the God-man laid open His side that all might have access to the Divine Heart. Herein, all our vexations—our disappointments—will vanish, melting away in that furnace of Love.

Any reward for suffering seems very distant to us here below. Only too keenly do we feel that—

> "All chastisement for the present seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow" (Heb. xii 11).

This sorrow, however, as St Bernard reminds us, is drunk in only drop by drop. The reward, he adds, will be poured down upon us as a river of peace, inundating us with its never-failing waters. "Behold," we read in Ecclesiasticus, "how I laboured a little, and have found much rest to myself" (chap. li 35). And in St Paul:

> "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv 17).

Let us then be buoyed up, recollecting that our chastisement will "yield, to them that are exercised in it, the most peaceful fruit of justice" (*ibid.*).

CHAPTER IV

THOUGHTS FROM ST MARK AND ST JOHN

"Thou didst feed Thy people with the Food of Angels,
"having in It all that is delicious,
"and the sweetness of every taste."
(*The "Communion," 13th Sunday after Pentecost.*)

FROM the story of the first multiplication of the loaves, as told by the Evangelists, especially St Mark and St John, one may get food for reflection that should help to increase his devotion and love for the Holy Mass.

We there read that, with His Disciples, our Divine Master took boat over the Lake of Genesareth, apparently to avoid the crush of the crowd which had followed Him; for He was weary after His day's labours.

> "There were many," says the sacred text, "coming and going, and they—the Apostles—had not so much as time to eat" (Mark vi 31).

On reaching the other side, however, He saw a great multitude, many of whom had hurried round the head of the Lake and forestalled His landing. Our Divine Lord "felt compassion for them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things" (Mark

vi 34). How characteristic this is of Christ's human Heart!

As it was already growing late, six or seven o'clock in the evening, the Disciples were becoming anxious about the people and asked their Master to "dismiss them, that they may depart into the country and villages about, and buy themselves something to eat"—no doubt a wise suggestion from the point of view of the Disciples!

But our Blessed Lord had long looked forward to this moment; it was one of those special moments for which His Heart had yearned, as may be divined from John vi 6: "For He Himself *knew what He would do*."

"Do ye give them to eat," said He to the Twelve. This seemed more than a direction, it took the form rather of a command. He would expect the impossible.

"Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread and give them to eat?" was their astonished rejoinder.

On learning from His Apostles that there were at hand five loaves and two fishes, one can almost feel the throb of emotion of His Sacred Heart as He asked them to get the people to "take their places in companies upon the green grass" (Mark vi 39).

Contemplate Him, then, as He takes the loaves and fishes, and raising His eyes to His Heavenly Father, blesses and breaks the bread and gives it

to the Twelve to serve out to the multitude, and likewise the fishes.

How uppermost in our Lord's thoughts was that "Gift of God" at which He had hinted to the woman at Jacob's Well! This was the prelude also and forecast of what was to take place on the night of the Last Supper—the very shadow of the great Coming Event.

The men sat down—five thousand in number—to partake of this miraculous bread. And just as the Israelites of Old did not realise the significance of the rain of manna in the desert, so now, neither were the Disciples, much less the people, able to understand the import of this breaking and distributing the bread which the Lord had provided.

It was the figure and type of the Gift of His own Body and Blood to us, to be our spiritual Food. That both the Disciples and the people were "without understanding" does not deter Him from His loving purpose. He foresaw that many, surely, there would be, who *would* understand.

As, on the eve of His Crucifixion, Christ withdrew, not only from the Disciples whom He left near the entrance to the Garden, but even from the chosen three, to be freer to commune with the Father; so, on this occasion, one may readily conjecture that His Soul was so filled with loving thoughts at the immensity of the act which He was here, as it were, anticipating, that He found the company even of His Apostles out of harmony with His unbounded desires. For, we read that, after the

fragments of bread were taken up, He "*compelled* His Disciples to embark and go on before Him to the other side towards Bethsaida, whilst He would Himself dismiss the people" (Mark vi 45).

Possibly their companionship was not congenial at that moment for two reasons: Firstly, that, since the multitude was so enthusiastic over the wonders He was effecting as to be minded to establish Him their King, our Lord may have understood that the Disciples also would only too readily share the view of these men and imagine that the possible goal of their ambition would be reached at no very distant date.

Accordingly, our Divine Master wishes to escape, not only from the men who were about to "come and take Him by force and make Him King," but also from the presence, for the moment, even of His chosen band.

The second reason was that He wanted to commune, alone, with His Heavenly Father; to tell Him His love and gratitude—alone.

Hence, after ordering His Disciples to take boat, dismissing the multitude, He "departed unto the mountain to pray" (Mark vi 46).

What a wealth of thought would be ours were we able to enter into Christ's mind aglow with love and sacrifice! Though no one may fully fathom His thoughts in such a crisis, for only God may know what passes in the mind of God, still, our earnest desire to interpret it will not go unrewarded.

Alone They confer. Alone. Father and Son: alone!

Let us then with reverence draw near Him as He communes with His Eternal Father on the hillside. We know that the "place whereon we stand is holy ground." Nevertheless, we too, like Moses, removing the "shoes from our feet" and approaching nearer, shall try to understand "why the bush is not burnt"; why His Sacred Heart is not consumed by the fire of His love.

"Hiding our face" we shall reverently endeavour to read at least the outermost circle of His thoughts, as He kneels, alone, absorbed in prayer. And, unlike the three Apostles, later, in the Garden of Olives, let us be alert to watch with Him in this His "Agony of Love." It is the "alpha" of which His Agony in Gethsemane will be the "omega"; the former portraying His Love, the latter, His Love and Sacrifice.

Our Lord is on the eve of solving a problem which, humanly speaking, seemed impossible of solution. His Soul was torn between two loves, each of which was infinite. On the one hand stood His Father's resolve—*that He should leave us :* "And the Son of man indeed goeth, according to that which is determined" (Luke xxii 22).

On the other hand, His own love *urged Him to remain :* "My delights (are) to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii 31).

Hence the dilemma.

Which shall yield?

Will it be the Father's determination?

No! Certainly not! For we know that to do His Father's will was, as it were, His food and

consolation. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." And again: "I do always the things that please Him" (John viii 29).

Well then, His love for mankind must give way?

No! Not that either. For, love at times seems as if inspired. He discovers a way out of the difficulty; He will *go without going; remain without remaining!*

Since the Father wished it, He will take from us the charm of His presence, of His gaze, of His voice. But, of this very presence He will leave us the truth, the reality.

And in this way does He solve the problem.

Surely this was the moment for which His Heart had sighed from the beginning. He is filled with profound joy that His grand object is beginning to be realised: that, after the Redemption, the most cherished wish of His life, His all-consuming desire, is about to be accomplished.

He knew, with infinite knowledge, what this meant both for His Father's glory and for us His brothers and sisters. He was devising a means whereby we could infinitely honour His Father throughout the ages to come. Hence the urgency of His appeal: "*Do this in Memory of Me.*"

From all the circumstances it is clear that our Lord attached the loftiest meaning to this prodigy of His love. He is on the eve, too, of setting forth the doctrine of His Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist on earth—that He would Himself be the spiritual food of our souls. It is the very foreshadowing of the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Our Divine Master feels how unnatural, humanly speaking, the accomplishment of His yearning would appear to mankind. He foresees the crowd on the morrow trying to grasp the astounding statement—that they were to "*eat His Flesh and drink His Blood.*"

In anticipation He hears their murmurs and sees many turning from Him:

"After this many of His disciples went back:
"and walked no more with Him" (John vi 67).

For how many throughout the ages was not this to be the test of their submission!

Would His apostles, too, leave Him?

Peter's answer, voicing the sentiment of many a heart, comes as a balm to His Soul:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.
"And we have believed and have known,
"that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John vi 70).

Our Lord's Soul was overflowing with gratitude to His Father to be thus able to show His love for His fellow-men, and by this act to bring, at the same time, such glory to His Father.

It was "with desire that He had desired," this day, to break the good tidings to mankind; that He was to abide with man here on earth, though not in human form, till the end of the world.

He looks down the long corridors of time and sees the Church, which was destined to be His mystical body, spread over the whole earth.

To His mental vision are present the many tabernacles—material and living—in which He would dwell amongst men.

He sees the Holy Sacrifice being offered on innumerable Altars and the multiplication of the "Bread of Life," His own Body—as the material bread that day—in the hands of His priests, till the consummation of this earth.

He sees them breaking this same Bread to the weak ones and to the strong of the fold. And all this would be renewed daily upon countless Altars, in fulfilment of Malachy's prophecy, till the end of time.

"For from the rising of the sun even to the going down . . .
"and in every place, there is sacrifice,
"and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Malachy i 11).

He begs the Father to accept the gratitude of His Sacred Heart for all that this favour would betoken for mankind and its consequent glory to the Blessed Trinity . . .

"*through Him, and with Him, and in Him.*"

Possibly some six or seven hours were thus spent in close union with God, repeating and renewing His thanks that this special mark of His Father's condescension was so near to realisation.

Let us now turn to the Twelve who have already "got under way." Though it may have been due to the storm, their little headway—about four miles

in some six hours—would seem to point to a preoccupation of mind regarding the wonderful miracle wrought before they embarked by their young Chief. He was, no doubt, the only topic of their conversation.

"About the fourth watch"—three or four o'clock in the morning—their boat began to be buffeted by wind and wave. Such storms are not unfrequent on the Lake of Tiberias; the wind sweeps down one of the valleys leading to it, causing the disturbance.

When the storm was at its height our Lord appeared to the Apostles as He walked on the waters. The Sacred Heart was, as ever, watching over His chosen few.

Only faintly can one imagine their surprise at seeing an apparition amid the uproar, on the sea. Naturally, fear at first seized them.

But, soon the well-known Voice comes from out the surrounding gloom—as, often, in our own lives:

"Be of good heart; it is I, fear not" (Mark vi 50).

From this familiar form of address, one might surmise that the Twelve were even then taken up in thought about Him and His many wonderful deeds.

Would that our thoughts could be so occupied with this same good Master! Our many failures would sadden us less were our hearts and minds filled with the consideration of Him.

Tempest-tossed, and in the dim light they are afraid. But, what a reward now is theirs!

"Still with unhurrying chase,
"And unperturbèd pace,
"Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
"Came on the following Feet,
"And a Voice above their beat. . . .
"'Be of good heart; it is I, be not afraid. . . .'"
(Francis Thompson.)

From a Greek Sequence in the Oriental Church we have the following comforting verse:

"Jesu, Deliverer! Come Thou to me,
"Soothe Thou my voyaging Over life's sea!
"Then, when the storm of death Roars sweeping by,
"Whisper, O Truth of Truth, 'Peace! It is I.'"

How impossible to comprehend the love of Christ for His "Little Children"!

How thoughtful and anxious is His care for His own! And, why should we be less His own than they?

"He came unto His own" and they had received Him. Let it be so also with us in the depth of our being, as also in Holy Communion, that we too may be made the sons of God.

The Mass is the moment of God's nearest approach—

"His Hands are upon us in the Sacraments:
"His Voice reaches us through the Church:
"His Real Presence makes our tabernacles as the hearths of our homes:

"But, the moment of His nearest approach to us, is the moment of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass" (Bishop Hedley).

"Be of good heart; it is I, be not afraid," should bring the same peace of soul to us as it did on that forbidding night to the Apostles.

"It is I, fear not," was destined to be a support to them in after years, and to their followers throughout the ages.

In persecution and in doubt, in suffering and in trial, the reassuring refrain was to bring peace and joy to many hearts till the end of time.

Our Divine Pastor says to His priests at the Altar of incense:

"It is I, fear not. At your word I am present on the Altar. Nor bread nor wine is any longer there."

The same soothing words are spoken by these sacred lips to all who, in difficulty, in danger or distress, are willing to give ear. When, too, about to yield our soul to its Creator, He will whisper the self-same assurance:

"It is I, be not afraid. . . ." A consoling utterance, surely, from the lips of Him Who is presently to be our Judge!

Having watched over us in life, in a life spent for His interests, how could He overlook us when we are about to fall asleep in death, when we shall be so helpless?

If His Heart watches over us with such solicitude whilst He is asleep, as He Himself tells us, what will not be His care of us at our bed of death, when His whole Being will be centred upon our salvation! And what our serenity of soul when we shall hear His Voice of Peace addressing us. "It is I, fear not."

"Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
"Save Me, *save only Me*. . . ."
(Francis Thompson.)

When Peter, whose craft was nigh submerged, hears the familiar Voice, "It is I, be not afraid," he recognises his young Master, and, drawn on by enthusiasm, making answer, he said:

"Bid me come to Thee upon the waters" (Matth. xiv 28).

Who else would have even thought of such a request? But, love is akin to madness.

And Jesus said: "Come."

Nothing doubting, Peter springs from the boat's side on to the water, as if it were frozen.

This suggestion of the Apostle occasioned to our Lord no little pleasure, as, surely, the novelty of the experience to Peter himself!

But, His Divine Master had destined it to be a lesson in trust, not to Peter alone and to those with him, but to "His ardent admirers" for all time.

The Apostle, thus far intrepid, begins to vacillate:

"But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid" (Matth. xiv 30).

At his wavering, the sea loses its miraculous buoyancy. What an inexpressible feeling of relief it is then, to Peter as he "begins to sink," to clutch our Lord's outstretched hand!

"Rise, clasp My hand and come. . . ."
(Francis Thompson.)

"O thou of little faith," He whispers, "why didst thou doubt?" "All things fail thee," He seems to say, "who failest in trust in Me."

"Why didst thou doubt!" Such was the exclamation of surprise elicited from our Lord at Peter's hesitation.

Of surprise! For, though it was so uncanny, and so contrary to nature that the sea bore him on its bosom, Christ expected him still to trust on.

Whence shall *we* obtain strength to stand erect in our storm-tossed life, if not from that same Hand—

"outstretched caressingly . . ."?
(Francis Thompson).

That hand is nearest in the Holy Mass; for there, our Lord has embodied for us the wealth of His love. His promise, and the reward, are realised through the Holy Sacrifice:

"And I give them life everlasting;
"and they shall not perish for ever,
"and no man shall pluck them out of My hand"
(John x 28).

Having given the Apostles, and Peter in particular, this lesson in trust, "He went up to them into the

boat, and the wind fell, and they were utterly beside themselves with astonishment " (Mark vi 51).

This calming of the waves was yet another sign of His regard and care, as well as of His power. It was as welcome as it was unexpected. Let it be to us as a confirmation of our faith and confidence in His even greater love and concern for us.

Then we read, " And presently, the ship was at the land " (John vi 21). " Presently." This is considered by some to point to a miracle in its way unique. For, it would appear that though they were still some three miles from the shore, they suddenly found themselves at the land, without further labour.

It was on that day, after disembarking at Capharnaum, that our Master preached the doctrine of the Real Presence, as we have it in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

By the miracle of the " multiplication of the loaves " Christ was commencing to smooth the way for us—pastors and people—to believe in the future words of Consecration—His own and those of His priests. The " hard saying " of the morrow would thus not be addressed to minds unprepared.

Let us not be blind, but strive to understand *with what great desire Jesus Christ has desired to show us His love ;* and try in our own degree, not only to respond to such warmth of affection, but to requite it, and make reparation to His Divine Heart for the coldness shown Him by many, even by some on whom He has often lavished signal marks of favour.

CHAPTER V

"VICTIMS" WITH CHRIST

"Grant, O God, that by the mystery of this water and wine
"we may be made partakers of His Divine Nature
"Who vouchsafed to become participator in our human nature."
(*Liturgy of the Mass.*)

After our Lord had pronounced the words of Consecration, we believe that what had been till then bread and wine were no longer such, but that their substances were changed into His own Body and Blood; and that their appearances—taste, colour, form, etc.—alone remained.

May we not, however, understand the words of Consecration as spoken over our very selves; that we, too, like the elements of the bread and wine, may be changed in a certain real sense into part-victims with Christ?

To acknowledge God's dominion over man and his dependence on Him, the sacrifices in the Old Law supposed that not alone the animal whose blood was poured out, but also that those offering the sacrifice, formed the victim of the sacrifice, substituting the life of the animal for their own.

So in the New Dispensation should we endeavour to realise that, in union with our Divine Victim, we too likewise form part of the Victim that is offered up, and are, consequently, wholly consecrated to God,

not indeed by our deaths at the Altar, but by considering our lives—thoughts, words and actions—as entirely belonging to God.

Could this grand idea sink deep into our minds—that we too are intended with Christ to form a part of the sacrificial gifts—and consequently to become "victims" in the Mass for the redeeming of mankind, the Holy Mass would possibly have a new and deeper meaning for us.

We should feel, moreover, that we had become, as it were, *living instruments* in God's hands to further His kingdom on earth, and be amongst the number of those . .

> "in whom He hath placed the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v 19),

forming and consolidating the reign of Christ in souls. For, His kingdom is mainly neither in place nor in space, but *in living souls*. If all creation may be said to be God's temple, the human soul is its inner shrine: nay, His very altar.

And not alone at the Mass should we remember we are victims, but the recollection of it should have a salutary influence on our daily lives. This would be no small impetus to us, urging us to become more and more like to Christ, *god-like* in a very real sense.

Thus would our humanity be affording the Divinity Itself "an extension of goodness, by allowing the white light of the infinite to be shown in a thousand tints of human ways, and give expression to the divine in a thousand lisping syllables

of affections, terms and works of Virtue" (Hughes, *Talks on Truth*).

Like the life of the Church, our own lives would then be a kind of continuation of the Life of Christ on earth. Then would Christ still tread the earth, exercising His faculties of mercy, winning all to His Father's love. It is *for Him*, *and in Him*, that His Spouse the Church helps the poor, strengthens the weak, cures the blind and the lame, forgives sinners and consoles the dying.

It was with the intensest longing that Christ awaited the moment when He might constitute His new body amongst us, the mystical body of which we have the privilege to be members. It was the moment when He would abide, and literally . . .

"live, and move, and have His being in us!" (Acts xvii 28).

"I will not leave you orphans," He said:
"I will come to you" (John xiv 18).

And again:

"If any man love Me, he will keep My word,
"and My Father will love him,
"and We will come to him,
"and make Our abode with him" (John xiv 23).

What touching words are these from His lips, uttered shortly before He made His own supreme Sacrifice! One would think that to fulfil His appeal would be to confer upon Him a favour. The equality He strives to set up between the gift

of ourselves to Him and His Gift to us is striking and astonishing, but reassuring.

"I am the vine," He says, "you the branches."

Our Eucharistic Vine "grows" on our Altars. It is to the Altar, then, that we, the branches, must cling. Hence the solicitude of the Church in making attendance at Mass on certain days a grave obligation.

The sap of His Life, His spirit, must animate us, so that we may each become another Christ, saying with St Paul:

"Alter Christus sum ego."

Then should we be a "new creature" *in Him*.

"If then any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:
"the former things are passed away:
"behold all things are made new" (2 Cor. v 17).
"Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new paste" (1 Cor. v 7).

And again St Paul writes: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii 1).

The offering of ourselves in sacrifice that our High Priest asks, is to be of the pure flour of our life's best. It is over this, in part, that we may hear His sacred words pronounced at the moment of Consecration, to become consecrated, as victims—set apart, offered, immolated—*with Christ*, to God and to His service.

By the words of Consecration at Mass the "substance" of the material bread is changed, and likewise that of the wine.

So let it be with us. This change has already been prefigured in the mingling of the water in the Chalice of wine, that, just as Christ assumed our human nature, so may we be transformed into His Divine Nature.

In the "Secret" for Trinity Sunday we pray:

"Hallow, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, by the invoking Thy holy name the Victim which is offered up: and by Its means *make of us too* a perfect gift to Thee for evermore."

Let us renew this consecration of ourselves, daily if possible, at this august Sacrifice; and look upon it as a part of our business in life to help to carry on Christ's work amongst our fellow-men.

With us, however, unlike the wheaten bread and the wine, there should be likewise a change in our *exterior*—the outward notes that go to make up our identity: the accidents, in a word, of our own selves. Not only these external traits, but our speech, our accent, our every gesture and movement, should "betray" us to be one of His.

This close communing with Christ could not but have its salutary effects, firstly on our own lives by a faithful imitation of our Divine Model, and secondly, on our devotedness to His cause, in spreading His kingdom on earth, and in fanning to flame the fire of His love, now merely smouldering in the hearts of many.

"I am come," He tells us, "to cast fire on earth, "and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii 49).

Like the lighted tapers on the Altar, then, would our lives be wholly consumed, shedding light, and warmth of fervour in the service of our Creator.

Then would the Eternal Father consider Himself as our Debtor, constrained to declare us "His beloved sons, in whom He is well-pleased." He would deign to make us the depositaries of the treasures of heaven, which we in turn should freely bestow on others, knowing that we are ourselves the more enriched in their distribution.

We should thus go sowing the divine seed of charity—love of God and of our neighbour—broadcast, to return with joy in the harvest time, loaded with golden sheaves for the Master's barns.

Moreover, our own prayers would be said with greater faith and earnestness, with the conviction that we shall be heard both for ourselves and for others. For the more we seek to help others, the more God gives Himself to us.

In all this we should be most in harmony with our Lord's earnestly expressed desire—"Do This in Memory of Me" . . . offering up this *altogether new Sacrifice* which He has left us, and so honouring His Father in a manner truly infinite.

In this way we should become living memorials of Christ Himself; bent, like Him, on transmitting the current of His spirit, that all might receive both light to see their way, and strength to walk in it, till a bright eternity dawns upon us all.

CHAPTER VI

A THOUGHT AFTER THE ELEVATION

And you were redeemed—
"With the Precious Blood of Christ,
"as of a Lamb unspotted and undefiled."
(1 *Pet.* i 19.)

As seen by God the Father and the Angels, and by ourselves with eyes of mind and heart—our bodily eyes closed—the scene on Golgotha might be likened to a most glorious sunset! It was the "passing out"—the "going down"—of our truest Friend, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, at the close of His mortal life amongst us.

His sacred, blood-stained Body was the focus whence shot forth rays of light and heat to infinity.

Love and Suffering vied with each other for the ascendancy.

The whole heavens were aglow with their gold and crimson beams.

The gold of Love fringed every cloud as with a blaze of exultation. Far and wide sky and earth were lit up; whilst all nature seemed hushed to sympathy, and mute, at the unparalleled beauty of the spectacle.

The Love-light from the Heart of our dying Saviour, like an aurora, bathed our poor earth in a

soft glow, inspiring hope, consolation and love. Never before had earth been witness of such a Passion of Love.

For three long hours the Son of God—"Light of the world"—slowly waning, sheds strong mercy-lit rays of light and warmth from the top of His "mount of myrrh," His "hill of frankincense."

But, see! The golden gleams of His Love are tinged with red; crimsoned and dazzling with roseate hue!

Whence this tint so deep and universal, if it be not that a God is suffering?

And now, this colour of red is seen to be deepening.

From every wound of my dear Redeemer's Body issue streams of His Precious Blood. . . .

"*Cujus una stilla salvum facere*
"*Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.*"

One drop of which is enough to cleanse the world from every crime.

Just as the rays of the sun sinking in the heavens shoot forth from openings in the clouds, radiating from their centre, so do the streams of golden light, bathed in crimson, dart out from the Wounds of the Sacred Body of God's own Son, to fill our hearts with gladness and to strengthen us in hope.

Even as the aurora will the beams of this "Sun that never sets" increase in splendour unto a perfect day; and upon His Five Wounds in their intense brightness will the eyes of the eternal Father gaze

with infinite complacency for ever. With the Psalmist we say:

"The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is *signed upon us:*
"Thou hast given gladness in my heart,
"and hast singularly settled me in hope" (Ps. iv).

What a stream of light and warmth—Love and Sacrifice—gushes from His sacred Side!

But, alas! His human nature, like our own, is but limited. The rays diminish: The Precious Flood slackens: The fire of His Love is consuming Him.

The crimson turns to purple.

Behold our King clothed in His robes of choice! His Body wrapped in the purple garb of suffering!

The grass about the foot of the Cross is bedewed with a myriad priceless Jewels of His Life-Blood—each several drop reflecting Him, a silent witness of His Love.

And now, the purple tint gives place to grey. The last drop of Blood trickles from His Sacred Heart, and falls from the "Red-Rose"—the "Love-Wound"—on His Breast.

How eloquently had not the love which had lain concealed in His Heart made itself known by the wounds of His Body! His "poor" Body was *all one wound.*

As the livid, unearthly hue of death creeps over Him, all nature, in awe, seems to sympathise with

her Lord. She would mourn her God about to go down to the tomb!

The temple veil is rent in twain; rocks are burst asunder: the earth quakes, and the graves give back their dead (Matt. xxvii 28).

The sun refuses to give its light, and darkness wraps its mantle of gloom in ever-deepening silence about Calvary's hill.

The rays of Love-light from His sacred Wounds yield to the gathering shadows, as He, the Sun of Justice, sinks into the oblivion of death.

* * * * *

Only for a short while, however, is our earth to remain in shadow; for, soon—on Easter Morn—the Sun of Hope and Peace will rise and shine upon us, bursting rosy-fingered, like the dawn, into brightest gleams of promise and comfort for orphaned man.

". . . and again a little while and *you shall see Me*;" was Christ's promise at the Last Supper. How early has He begun to fulfil it! To us this "little while" may appear long, as St Augustine says; but, when its *fleeting* moments have elapsed, then shall we know how short, in reality, it was (St August., Tract. 101).

As the sun rises in the East from the limitless ocean, so does The Christ, the Son of God, rise up from out the deep of God's boundless mercy; . . . the Ocean of God's love for us, His new-chosen people.

" Through the bowels of the mercy of our God,
" in which the Orient—Jesus Christ—from on high
" hath visited us " (Luke i 78).

He brings light in His rising, not only to us who are still in the flesh, "*adhuc in carne*"; but also to those who have gone to the Limbo of the Fathers.

" To bring light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death . . .
" and to direct our feet in the way of *peace*" (Luke i 78, 79).
" The people that walked in darkness,
" have seen a great light:
" to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death
" light is risen " (Isa. ix 2).
" And My people shall sit in the *beauty of peace*,
" and in the tabernacle of confidence,
" *and in an abundant rest*" (Isa. xxxii 18).

Our Divine Master did not leave us in the throes of the Passion, or in the " shadow of the Cross."

" Be glad and rejoice " then, for He has " again regenerated us unto a living hope through His Resurrection " (1 Pet. i 3). He wishes that our life should be one of confidence and joy, ever looking forward to a future of never-ending happiness. We are to:

" Rejoice in the Lord, *ever* " (Phil. iv 4); " *singing in grace in your hearts to God* " (Col. iii 16).

Let us who are of "the household of the faith," and whose lives are spent in the light of such promises, endeavour more and more to fathom Christ's mercy for wayward man in His Passion. We could scarcely fail then to be filled with compassion for Him and with admiration for His loving-kindness. Nay, we should then show in a practical way our appreciation of His life amongst us; for, not being satisfied with avoiding anything that might wound such love, we shall be filled with zeal to spread the knowledge of it amongst others.

A strengthening of our faith will come to us by the oft-repeated oblation of the Holy Sacrifice. This again will increase till our faith yield to vision, and we find ourselves at the close, sinking, with Love Crucified, to our grave indeed in body, but only to awaken, our soul made happy, to the vision of Him Whom we have followed. . . . Followed in life, to be united in death and for eternity. Amen!

CHAPTER VII

THE "GIFT OF GOD"

"But he that shall drink of the water that I will give him,
"shall not thirst for ever:
"But, It shall become in him a fountain of water,
"springing up into life everlasting."
(*John* iv 13, 14.)

How rich we are and favoured of God in possessing the Blessed Eucharist, whether as a Sacrament or as a Sacrifice!

A God-Victim puts Himself into our hands that we may be able to:

Honour His Father and ours, in union with Him:
Thank His Father and ours, in union with Him:
Petition His Father and ours, in union with Him:
for the forgiveness of sin;

and for the many gifts and graces which we need to serve Him.

What homage do we not owe God our Father, if we consider His greatness—His Immensity!

What gratitude do we not owe Him if we remember His benefits!

What reparation do we not owe Him if we recall our sins and ingratitude!

Were it not for the Mass, with its divine gift—man's greatest treasure—and all it means to us, what would not be our misery, our helplessness, our

nothingness! How could we fulfil our manifold duties? How subdue our enemies, so many and so powerful? How attain to the sublime destiny intended for us?

But, possessing Jesus Christ, through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we confidently and without fear "shoulder the heavy burden," and have it in our power to *worthily honour our Maker*. For, we duly thank Him; fully appease His anger; and, with a confidence bordering on boldness, constrain Him to hear our voice. In a word, we honour God as God deserves to be honoured.

Looking to our unaided selves, to "honour God as God deserves" is altogether beyond our natural powers. But, *through Christ*, and *with Christ*, and *in Christ*—in the Sacrifice of the Mass—we unhesitatingly, but with gratitude, affirm that we can, and do, "honour God as He deserves."

The greatest gift God could send us was that of His own Adorable Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. This incomparable gift He sent us in the Incarnation. And we, in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, return Him the self-same gift—His Divine Son—thereby *honouring God as God deserves*. Jesus Christ on the Altar is pre-eminently THE gift of God's condescension and love.

The Altar is as another Calvary; for we know from the Council of Trent that in the Mass there is the same Victim as on Calvary: the same Offerer—Christ our High Priest—as on Calvary: the same

sacrificial action as on Calvary: and the same end, or object, as Christ had on Calvary.

Our Redeemer's object on Calvary was chiefly the Redemption of the human race. This object was fully attained on the Cross. It is the purpose of the Sacrifice of the Mass to convey the fruits of the Redemption to the souls of the faithful.

On Calvary, the merits of Christ were infinite and therefore inexhaustible. On the Altar, He comes down to apply them to our souls.

The manner, alone, of offering the Mass, differs from that of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The shedding of Christ's Blood does not take place as on Calvary, but in a mystical, yet real, sense.

Let us hope that, in one other particular at least, the conditions of the offering of the Mass differ from those of Calvary.

What a spectacle met the gaze of those dying eyes from Golgotha's "gibbet of infamy"! Only dimly could they discern the seething crowd. But the *hearts* of those present were known to Him.

Many were there, alas! out of curiosity, listless and careless witnesses of His sorrows, and without even a suspicion of the adorable depths of the great mystery that was being enacted before them.

They heard the scoffs and sneers of the chief priests and of the soulless soldiery.

"And the people stood beholding, and the rulers with them derided Him, saying:
"He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ, the Elect of God."

"And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him and offering Him vinegar, saying:
"If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself" (Luke xxiii 35-37).

And again, as we read in the second Evangelist:

"And they that passed by blasphemed Him, saying:
"Save Thyself."
"In like manner also the chief priests mocking, said:
"He saved others, Himself He cannot save" (Mark xv 29-31).

How clearly David told us this, when, speaking for Christ, he said:

"They have spoken against me with deceitful tongues; and they have compassed Me about with words of hatred; and have fought against Me without cause.
"Instead of making Me a return of love, they detracted Me;
"but I gave Myself to prayer.
"And they repaid Me evil for good: and hatred for My love" (Ps. cviii 3-5).

A few others, however, there were, beside the Cross, on whom He gazed with tenderest love and gratitude. . . . Just a handful of faithful souls—Mary, a few pious women, and John.

"Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother" (John xix 25).

Let us trust the times have changed since then. And though there are many who still look on uninterested, and blaspheme, and in whose regard we repeat our dying Master's words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii 34); nevertheless, there are happily many who *do* understand. They are those who stand with Mary and John, or kneel with Magdalen, at the foot of the New Calvary—the Altar; and on these assuredly the appealing gaze of the Redeemer is by no means cast in vain. They at least will try to respond to such love.

Jesus Christ on the Altar is the world-wide gift of God, for it is given to all without exception.

After the Consecration, the Body and Blood of the priceless Victim do not belong to the priest offering the Sacrifice, or to the person for whom the Sacrifice is more especially offered.

Jesus Christ on the Altar belongs to All.

He belongs to the simple faithful as to the priest. This the priest makes clear, when, turning to the people, he says the . . .

"*Orate fratres*. . . ." That is: "Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and YOURS may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

It is mine, the priest says, because I offer it: but it is yours also who offer it with me; and it rests with yourselves to share in its fruits; whether you be poor or rich, little or great, ignorant or learned, young or old, masters or servants, fervent, tepid or sinners. A share in the fruit of the Mass is ours for the earnest asking.

Jesus Christ on the Altar is, again, the gift of God for all; for, what one claims or obtains from the Altar is not to the detriment of any other.

At this "Fountain of living waters" all can draw if they wish; as much as they wish; and as often as they wish.

They must, however, *come to draw.*

A fountain may be set up in a town, capable of supplying the needs of the townsfolk, and to which all have easy access; yet, it is possible for a person hard by to die of thirst. It would be enough that he obstinately refuse to drink.

The Mass is a fountain accessible to all; open to all; offered for all. But, unfortunately, all do not *come to draw* the "Living Waters."

Some there are who never come: others are present in body but absent in spirit and heart, not sufficiently appreciating this gift of God . . . caring little to understand this one thing above all necessary.

They are strangers in heart and mind to God to Whom the Sacrifice is offered: strangers to the Victim Who offers Himself in Sacrifice for them and their needs: strangers to the Chief-Priest Who offers it.

How one is reminded of our Lord's own prediction:

> "Neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead" (Luke xvi 31)!

For, did He Himself not rise from the dead?—and yet, they would not believe. And does He not also *still rise daily* from the dead in the Mass?

And yet, many there are who remain incredulous and so little concerned.

These pay no serious attention to the incomparable Mysteries of the Altar—this "Mysterium fidei." They will go to the ends of the earth to dig for gold, under great hardships, and at great risk; and pass on their way, at their very doors, a treasure of infinite value—truly a . . .

"Pearl of Great Price."

Though the efficacy of the Sacrifice of the Mass is independent of the sanctity, or otherwise, of the priest and people offering it, it is none the less true that, as a rule, the fruits of the Sacrifice are applied to us, in proportion to the faith and piety we bring to it.

The abundance of water in a fountain, its transparency and health-giving properties, in no way depend on the earnestness with which people come and draw from it. These qualities being once granted, it is evident that those will draw to greater advantage who come oftener for this purpose and with vessels better prepared.

"And he that thirsteth, let him come;
"and he that will, let him take water of life, freely" (Apoc. xxii 17).

Let us, then, learn to appreciate this "Gift of God," going often to this "Source of all Good" for us, *if possible daily*—even at some inconvenience to ourselves.

Then, indeed, we should find that God would fulfil in us what He promised, of old, to the house of Jacob:

"For the Lord thy God will bring thee into a good land,
"of brooks and of waters, and of fountains:
". . . a land of wheat . . . and the vine:
"a land of oil and honey" (Deut. viii 7, 8).

The words of the Prophet Isaias, too, will likewise be realised in us:

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains:
"And you shall say in that day:
"Praise ye the Lord and call upon His name:
"*Make His works known among the people:*
"Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath done great things:
"*Show this forth in all the earth.*
"Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion—the Church:
"for great is He that is in the midst of thee,
"the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xii 3-6.)

The "Fruits" of the Holy Sacrifice

All the members of the Church, Militant and Suffering, may benefit by the Mass, not only because the Church so offers it that all who need it may receive help and consolation, but also, and especially, because Christ Himself herein renews the Oblation

of Himself for His Bride—His mystical body—and for each individual of it.

"His going out is from the end of heaven,
"and His circuit even to the end thereof"
(Ps. xviii 7).

Not one of His own but is to enjoy the warmth and comfort of His love.

"Unto thousands of hearts that are unaware of it, there radiate from the Altar rays of supernal Light, to enlighten and to lead back the stray sheep to Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls (1 Pet. ii 25), into the sheepfold, to the maternal home of the one true Church, in which the treasures of all the ways of grace and its gifts are unfolded to them and placed at their disposal" (Dr. Gihr, p. 177).

All may be shareholders in this "Bank of Heaven" and may not only draw a goodly interest, but, handsome bonuses will be lavishly distributed amongst them—not annually, but daily—whilst the capital will never decrease.

To those present at Mass, and who are therefore joint-offerers with the priest, falls a fruit proportioned to their attention and intensity of purpose.

It is generally admitted that, other things being equal, those who serve Mass—the acolytes—receive a greater share in the blessings of the Sacred Rite than the rest of the "assistants." It is no small honour to be permitted so to minister at the Altar.

By our bodily presence at the Holy Sacrifice we are morally united as one with the celebrant;

a certain amount of attention then satisfies the obligation imposed on us by the Church regarding Sundays and special Feast-days.

But, how much more nearly are we united when we are joined with the priest *in mind and heart*, with every faculty focussed upon the immensity of the Act we are performing, and, as it were, bowed down in the utmost submission to honour our Creator and Father. For, whilst the outward service has its place in our homage to the Deity, it is *the inner offering of the heart* that gives to it the recognised hallmark. For, "The Lord beholdeth the heart" (1 Kings xvi 7).

How widely then, the merits, or fruit of the Sacrifice, may differ in two persons side by side among those present!

Naturally a special fruit is the portion of those for whom the Mass is being celebrated according to the intention made by the Priest. For these, the Mass has the power both of propitiation and of petition.

And, lastly, a very special fruit—immeasurable—is the lot of the celebrant acting in the name of the Church. How pure should not his heart be to impersonate so closely His Master as to become identified with him in so tremendous a Sacrifice!

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOLY MASS, STRENGTH IN TRIAL

" For I reckon that the sufferings of this time
" are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come,
" that shall be revealed in us."
(*St. Paul to the Romans* viii 18.)

In the *Imitation of Christ* we read:

" As I willingly offered Myself to God, My Father, for thy sins, with My hands stretched out upon the Cross, and My Body naked, so that nothing remained in Me, which was not turned into a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath; even so must thou willingly offer thyself to Me *daily in the Mass*, for a pure and holy oblation, together with all thy powers and affections as heartily as thou art able " (Book iv, 8).

What an appeal to us to make of our lives one long sacrifice to God! Our life upon earth is a warfare, declares Holy Job. We are to " take up our Cross *daily* and follow Christ."

" To bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to chastise the body, and bring it under subjection; to fly honours, or be willing to suffer reproaches, to despise one's self, and wish to be despised; . . . is not according to man's natural inclination " (*Imit.*, ii 12).

How far removed are such sentiments from those of the world!

But, where get the strength to so follow Christ our Model?

The greatest help, it may be answered, will come to us through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

This exalted Offering awakens in us desire for virtue. Nothing on earth is more calculated to arouse in us such sentiments of deep contrition and piety, to stir us up to resolutions, and strengthen these resolves to imitate Christ.

It is at the Altar that we obtain strength to face the ordeal of life; to begin afresh when we find our resolutions wavering or broken; and it is in this way, by God's help proffered through the Mass, that we are encouraged to persevere.

Many of the acts in our daily life which we may regard as important, upon which we spend much thought and time, and set our hearts, really lead nowhere, or *do not in reality matter*.

What, indeed, is of importance is, our being united in all we do with the Divine Presence which dwells within all who are in the state of grace: God abiding in the heart. This is the only matter that is really of interest to Him as far as we personally are concerned. All other acts *have no bearing on eternity*.

We add an "eternal something" to our store of merit in everything we do through a good intention, and in accordance with God's will; but how greatly is our act enhanced, when offered in union with Christ's Offering of Himself in the Holy Mass!

Ask the builders of the once mighty temples and palaces, now in ruins, of Memphis or of Babylon, what

now remains to them of their work. If a material building, long since crumbled, were their sole purpose, then their time was spent largely in vain as regards eternity.

How important for us to see that the "eternal something" may be the result, in part at least, of *all* our acts!

This, however, is possibly overlooked by many. They seem to be too engrossed with the spirit of the world, in their pursuit, as St Ignatius of Loyola says, after "riches, honours and pleasures." It is as though the Lord had:

"Mingled for them the spirit of a deep sleep,
"and had shut their eyes . . . " (Isa. xxix 10).

The words also of the inspired writer may be applied to them:

"The fascination of this trifle makes me lose sight of the good,
"and the variableness of concupiscence upsets the good order of my soul" (Wis. iv 12).

It is the object of the Church to direct these tendencies, so strong in human nature, into the right channels. She lives a life of trial and sacrifice. The Church issued from the open wound in the side of Christ as He hung upon the Cross. She was there begotten; her inheritance was to be one of suffering and of trial; the life of her members who form her mystical body was to be a warfare.

That the Church is in persecution anywhere means that the cross is being more heavily laid on those members where the storm is raging. Through the grace and merits of her Spouse these individuals are strengthened to bear the trial with patience and resignation, and perhaps with joy of spirit.

It is for each of us, then, to understand and realise, at least partially, that we have a duty to fulfil, as members of Christ's own Body, in submitting to the trials, and ups and downs of life, all along its journey. We are, as St Paul tells us, to be . . .

> "Always bearing about in our body the mortifications of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. iv 10).

These crosses may be constant, taking the form of suffering, temptations, injuries, being passed over, elbowed out, snubbed and so on. They might be summed up in one word "disappointment"—in our work, in those whom we call our friends, and in our own selves.

And yet, we are in no better way, perhaps, weaned from creatures and from the false values at which we appraise them, than by disappointments. In this matter we may remain as if blind, all our lives.

In our weakness, then, where shall we turn?

Our Divine Physician has left us an antidote—a solace in our trials. It is that we cast our eyes upon Him in His abandonment, raised up on the

Cross as an object of contempt—a "fool of love"—for each of us! Has He not said:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
"will draw all things to Myself" (John xii 32)?

From the wound in His Sacred Side, what darts of love and comfort have gone forth to raise up stricken man!

Now, it is especially at Mass that this is realised; so that, seeing *Him* suffering with such patience and love, we may count upon Him as our Comforter and unwavering Friend. And thus it will be that, as St Paul tells us again:

"The inward man will be renewed day by day" (2 Cor. iv 16).

Possibly, however, not a few of our troubles and crosses are of our own making! The imagination becomes active and descries a grievance. We think it is a grievance, and therefore it is.

Self-pity, with some brooding over the supposed wrong, comes as oil to the flame and we begin to blaze up with indignation. We imagine we are bearing a cross, and probably we are. But, have we fashioned it ourselves? Our Lord's Cross was made by another! Self-compassion can prove a snare, and occasion us many a useless worry and consequent disturbance of soul.

In the many real tribulations of our life—and who could number them?—we should try to see the *will of God:* for it is by His permission that they

come. Let us endeavour to ACCEPT them, and with a cheerful "DEO GRATIAS" ("Thanks be to God") on our lips strive to embrace the cross that is laid upon us.

Adversity is a wise, if rude, teacher. It helps to dispel the pride still lurking in the heart, and urges us to cast ourselves in trust upon our merciful Father.

". . . Behind life's darkest clouds,
" God's love is always shining.
" We veil it at times with our faithless fears,
" And darken our sight with our foolish tears,
" But in time the atmosphere always clears,
" For His love is always shining."

(John Oxenham.)

Through a love for the Mass and its vivid presentation of the real Cross—Christ's Cross—our own crosses will participate in the virtue of His. For, like our Model, we shall see the will of God in all the eventful happenings of life. And thus, becoming "other Christs"—the very condition of our being recognised by the Father—our life will be happy, both here and hereafter. For, St Paul declares:

". . . if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh,
" you shall live. . . . For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony
" that we are the sons of God. . . .
" heirs also, and joint heirs with Christ:
" yet so, *if we suffer with Him*" (Rom. viii 13).

Whatever we do for God, all that we suffer, whether humiliations or bodily pains; whatever penances or mortifications we undertake; may be all summed up in the one general term "sacrifice."

This is closely linked with "love."

Love and sacrifice summarise the Life of Christ on earth.

So let it be, as far as may be, with us. Let there be *love*, and *sacrifice*, which is at once the condition and outcome of love, will surely follow.

These two, like the pillar of fire and the cloud for the Children of Israel, should ever accompany us, guiding us to our "Land of Promise" (Exod. xiii 21).

"O Lord Jesus Christ," the Church prays, "inflame our hearts with the heavenly *fire of sacrifice*, as an odour of sweetness: Who didst grant to St Alphonsus Maria to celebrate these holy mysteries; and by means of them, to offer himself up *as a holy victim to Thee*" (*The "Secret" of the Mass for the Saint*).

The following passage from the Old Testament, in which God is addressing Himself to His faithful servants, is here given as a suitable conclusion to this chapter, and will be found to provide a veritable store of food for fruitful reflection:

"Son, when thou comest to the service of God,
"stand in justice and in fear,
"and prepare thy soul for temptation"—that is, for trial:
"*Humble thy heart, and endure:*

" incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding:
" and make haste in the time of clouds: . . . of adversity.
" *Wait on God with patience:*
" join thyself to God, and endure,
" that thy life may be increased in the latter end.
" Take all that shall be brought upon thee:
" and in thy sorrow endure, *and in thy humiliation keep patience,*
" for gold and silver are tried in the fire,
" *but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation*"
(Ecclus. ii 1-5).

CHAPTER IX

THE ALTAR: THE TABERNACLE: THE CANDLES

" And another Angel came, and stood before the altar,
" having a golden censer;
" and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer
" of the prayers of all the Saints upon the golden altar,
" which is before the throne of God."
(*Apoc.* viii 3.)

The Altar

The Church has always regarded the Christian Altar as amongst the most sacred objects of her veneration on earth. It is the " hearth of the House of God " whence light and warmth radiate to all her members, Militant and Suffering, as well as joy and glory to those who have " won through."

For, whereas it is from her Spouse, Jesus Christ, that all graces flow to mankind, it is from the Altar that He dispenses them.

And, as it was on the Altar of the Cross that Christ paid the final ransom, and offered God the crowning act and proof of His Love, so it is on our humble Altars of stone that we renew that offering, together with our own prayers and acts—of sacrifice and love—through Christ, to our Eternal Father.

In his Commentary on Ps. lxxxiii Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine tells us that we have nothing on earth that better represents for us the " Eternal Tabernacle " of God in heaven, than our lowly Altar.

It seems to remind us of the things of paradise. On it is daily offered the Lamb of God, Who has opened heaven to those that believe, and here, too, a pledge of our future glory is given us.

At the Altar we stand nearer to God and are urged to beseech His help with greater advertence and earnestness. It is here also that we pour out our hearts to Him, in joy or in sorrow, and sing His praises more fervently than elsewhere.

Moreover, it is here that many a fervent soul, attracted by the "beauty of His House and the place where His glory dwelleth" (Ps. xxv 8), lays its plans for its future life with strong resolve, in peace and quiet: and like the sparrow and the turtle, finds a home for itself, and stores away, as in a nest, all its vows, its prayers, its yearnings and chaste desires, consecrating itself wholly to its sovereign Lover, Who is none other than Jesus Christ.

The Christian Altar symbolises our Blessed Lord —The "Living Altar." His Divine Subsistence or Person was the Altar of His own Great Sacrifice. His Flesh, united with Him in oneness of Person, was the Victim; His human spirit, or Soul, was the Priest: whilst the Holy Spirit was the consuming Fire.

"Christ was the Victim," says St Augustine, "according to His Flesh, and Priest according to His Soul" ("*Hostia quidem secundum carnem; sacerdos vero secundum spiritum*") (Serm. 130.)

Whilst, however, the Body and Blood of Christ were offered on the first Altar—that of the Cross—

as a pleasing Sacrifice to the Heavenly Father, the same Sacrifice was also offered in heaven, upon the *sublime Altar* in the presence of the Father—namely, the Bosom of the Eternal Word.

In this we follow the author of *Idée du Sacerdoce de Jesus-Christ*, and other interpreters who tell us that this "sublime Altar" is nothing less than the very Person of the Word.

The Temple of God in which this Altar is set is the Bosom of the Father, or as St Augustine says, "the infinite abyss and the impenetrable secret of the Divinity."

Hence, the real Altar of God, that of which all others are but figures, is the Divine Word, vivifying and sanctifying The Victim—that is, the humanity of Christ . . . (see Chaignon, *Sacrifice of the Mass*).

Upon this sublime Altar, too, it is that the Victim, finally made whole or perfected by the union with His members—the Church—will be, eventually, eternally presented to God, to adore Him, love Him, praise Him, and thank Him infinitely as is His due, continuing for ever this Sacrifice which will be the everlasting joy of all the saved. His Priesthood, says St Paul, is everlasting. . . . He is :

"ever living to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii 25).

How sacred, then, is our humble Altar of earth, in that it is a kind of duplicate, or counterpart, of such an exalted throne!

Such considerations of what our lowly Altars represent and symbolise should raise our appreciation of the excellence of the Christian Altar almost beyond anything else that earth contains.

We here recall, *for reflection*, the sublime prayer which is said soon after the Consecration:

" We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God,
" to command that these things—Christ's Body and Blood, as well as ourselves, our vows and prayers—
" be borne by the hands of Thy holy Angel
" *to thine Altar on high*, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty,
" that so many of us as at this Altar shall partake of and receive
" the Most Holy Body and Blood of Thy Son,
" may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.
" Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Altar, then, should be eminently sacred in our eyes, and consequently it is with a certain amount of dread that even the holiest priest will approach it to offer the august Sacrifice. At its archetype in the New Jerusalem we shall hereafter, for ever, let us hope, " adore the Father in spirit and in truth " (John iv 23).

The Tabernacle

On the Altar in our Churches there is a shrine—the Tabernacle—in which our Lord deigns to dwell.

Within our own bodies, likewise—which should also be temples of the Holy Spirit—there is an inner sanctuary, namely, *the heart*, on which, as on a living altar, all our sacrifices might be made as holocausts by the fire of love aflame, and wherein, as in a tabernacle, the Holy Trinity loves to abide.

This, of course, was pre-eminently true of Jesus Christ, whose Sacred Body was, in the highest possible degree, the Temple of the Holy Ghost.

His Sacred Heart, the inmost shrine of that Body and the fountain source of His Precious Blood, was a Living Tabernacle within Him, whose innermost recesses were as "a Garden Enclosed, a Fountain Sealed," for the gaze alone of the Triune God.

But, as well as the Tabernacle of our Altars and that of our Lord's Adorable Heart within His sacred humanity, there is yet another Tabernacle. It is the "Tabernacle which the Lord hath set up, and not man" (Heb. viii 2); and which is no other than the bosom of the Eternal Father in heaven.

It was into this invisible Sanctuary that our High Priest, like the high priest of old, re-entered, carrying the Blood of the Victim—His very Own—when, after His sojourn on earth, He returned to the Father.

There, in the "*tabernaculum aeternum*" of

St Paul (2 Cor. v 1), He perpetually renews the Oblation of the Victim of His own glorified humanity ever hypostatically united with the Word.

His offering of Himself once on the Cross was not to be the only, or last, oblation by which He was to worship His Father, but rather a commencement, and, as it were, the condition, of His never-ending Sacrifice of praise, of adoration, of love, and of atonement; a " holocaust of love," and a " consuming fire " (Deut. iv 24).

He was to offer within the Tabernacle " not made with hands " of God's bosom, throughout eternity, the very " perfection of sacrifice," infinitely pleasing to the Father, and wherein the Father would truly " communicate " in His Son, in the enjoyment of this Son's glorified life, now within His own Bosom.

The " entering " of Christ—God and man—into the bosom of the Father after the Resurrection was a real " Communion " of God with His Adorable First-Born.

Christ had prayed on the eve of His earthly dissolution:

> " Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had *in Thee* before the world was, with Thee " (John xvii 5).

This was an altogether spiritual and divine " Communion " wherein was bestowed upon Jesus Christ for the first time a new Life . . . " communicating " to Him in a divine effulgence the glory which He sought from the Father to possess.

In the "Communion" of this same Divine Victim, the Blessed, too, will share for ever in heaven. For the Council of Trent tells us that the same Bread of Angels which we eat now under the sacred Veils we shall eat there without veil.

Indeed, all of those whom the "Lion of the tribe of Juda" will have redeemed in His Blood, "out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and who have been made to God a *kingdom and priests*" (Apoc. v 9, 10), will likewise offer this Victim in Sacrifice for ever; for they will be then, more than ever, priests, in heaven, offering to His Father and theirs one long-continued oblation of thanksgiving. And as the Victim will be God's own Son, they will be giving Him an infinite praise—rendering to the Holy Trinity *through, and by, and in*, Jesus Christ an honour similar to that which God renders to Himself.

Hence, not only will our Blessed Lord offer Himself continually to the Blessed Trinity, together with us, His members, but we shall also, for eternity, offer ourselves with Him our Head and Victim; . . . the offerings of both being consumed in the inner Sanctuary of the Trinity by the consuming fire of the Holy Ghost.

In His humanity united with the Word, and joined also with us His "members," JESUS CHRIST will remain for ever:

The Altar, The Victim, and the Eternal Priest!

The Candles

It may be instructive to consider the use, according to the mind of the Church, of candles at Mass.

Light is a symbol of God Himself.

"God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness" (1 John i 5).

He is the eternal, the uncreated Light! A very Ocean of Light, of Beauty and of Glory.

"For with Thee is the fountain of Life;
"and in Thy Light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv 10).

Jesus Christ is the Light of the spiritual world as the sun is of our material world, only in an infinitely higher degree.

He is the "Light of the world," and a "Light to the revelation of the Gentiles."

And, not only is Christ the light of this world, but of the world to come.

"And," we read, "the city—the New Jerusalem—hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of the Lord hath enlightened it, and . . .

"the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi 23).

Nay, He is . . .

"*Lumen de Lumine*" ("Light of very Light").

The "Brightness of Eternal Light."

The "unspotted Mirror and Image of God's goodness" (*Liturgy of the Mass*).

Hence, from the very earliest times, lights—candles—were made use of by the Church in this most sublime of all her mysteries.

According to the present custom, at least two candles are required to be lighted at the Holy Sacrifice: six at High Mass. Hence, electric or other light may not be used in their stead.

The candles at Mass, moreover, must be of white or bleached wax; the yellow or unbleached are used at Tenebrae in Holy Week, at the Mass of the Pre-sanctified mysteries on Good Friday, and at the Office for the Faithful Departed.

Wax is the product of the *virginal* bee which is a world of wonder in its habits and was looked upon, even in St Ambrose's day, as a type of virginity.

It well merits the title of "busy" from its unselfish and untiring industry, gathering and forming the wax from blossoms, sweet-smelling and fragrant, and from the calyxes of flowers.

On our Altars the burning candle represents Christ in our midst.

The candle proper symbolises His humanity:

The bright flame denotes His Divinity:

The wick, concealed, is a figure of His Soul:

The warm wax drawn into the burning wick is a symbol of His Life-Blood being consumed for us:

And the wax itself, an emblem of His pure Body.

How beautiful a figure, then, is a wax candle of our Lord's Sacred Body, formed as It was from

the pure virginal bosom of Mary Immaculate, Spouse of the Holy Ghost!

The burning candle at the Holy Sacrifice may also be looked upon as a symbol of Christ as He dispenses to us enlightenment, grace, joy, and peace.

That the candle consumes itself wholly reminds us of Christ's love for us in sacrifice; for on the Altar He is a Victim of Love. It is also as an assurance of the light of His grace here and in eternity.

By the burning of the candles we are reminded to be present at Mass with devotion, and warmth of love, intending that our lives, too, may belong to, and be wholly consumed in, the service of God.

We could fruitfully take the modest wax candle burning on the Altar as a pattern for our own lives upon earth.

Its whiteness would remind us of purity of heart, by virtue of which *we shall see God* (Matt. v 8).

The constant gentle warmth will remind us of devotedness to the Church and its Liturgy.

The fragrance, so delicate and mysterious, which ever hangs around the sanctuary should be as the emblem of our lives to all those with whom we come into contact. Would that we could wholly consume them in, and for, God!

The brightness of the flame, moreover, might be for us a symbol of our faith kept aglow by our frequent offering of the Holy Mass. That the flame rises upward will ever recall hope and confi-

dence; whilst its warmth and glow will help to arouse in us the *spirit of charity*.

Before closing this chapter we add a word about the "Sanctuary Lamp."

On entering an oratory, or church, the Catholic mind instinctively looks for the tiny red light of the Sanctuary Lamp. Its presence speaks of another Presence—that of HIM Whom we seek.

At all times, but perhaps especially in the silence of the evening, its ruddy glow seems to call us to a warmth of devotion and of love for the abandoned "Prisoner" King.

How readily the words of the hymn rise to our thoughts, and to utterance!

"The lone lamp softly burns,
"And a wondrous silence reigns;
"Only with a low still Voice
"The Holy One complains. . . ."

He infinitely appreciates the "visit" of those who remember Him in His voluntary fetters. The very fact of "making" it argues remembrance, sympathy and love.

In our "visits" to Him, may the kindly beacon light of the Sanctuary Lamp—leading to secure anchorage—be ever for us, both as an emblem of the undying Love that consumes His Heart for us, and as a reminder to keep our own lamp—love—burning upon the altar of our hearts for Him. And, as love incites to love, we shall surely become *immersed* in Love, not alone here, but for eternity.

CHAPTER X

A PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

"The Lord shall sit as King for ever;
"The Lord shall bless His people with peace."
("*Communion*" *for the Feast of the Kingship of Jesus Christ.*)

Before Communion, let us endeavour to be thoughtful, occupying ourselves with acts of humility, and of longing for the visit of our Divine Guest.

Recollection:

Be recollected at the thought of the favour about to be conferred upon you. Those who receive Holy Communion often should try to live in an atmosphere of recollection, as a remote preparation for His coming.

Humility:

Humble yourself: O my God, I am unworthy. . . . But, to whom shall I have recourse, if not to Thee?

Do Thou Thyself, Lord, make me worthy. Thou canst do so, and I confidently trust that Thou wilt. To whom else can I go? This grace is Thine alone to give. "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Purify me in the truth.

Grant that I may love Thee and be one with Thee.

Do Thou prepare for Thyself a dwelling in my heart.

Desire:

Yearn to receive Him and long for His coming: O my God and my Redeemer, it was Thou Who saidst:

" Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you " (Matt. xi 28).

I have come to Thee that Thou mayest save me. Here I am, do Thou keep Thy promise.

Thou art my Physician: Here I am, cure me.

Thou art my Shepherd: Here I am, do Thou guard and lead me, and

" I shall want nothing " (Ps. xxii).

" Set me in a place of pasture," and bring me up on " the water of refreshment."

Keep Thy word, for Thou saidst Thou wouldst refresh me:

Direct my soul on the straight path: to discern and *relish* all that is meet and right: "*recta sapere*."

Lead me on in the paths of justice.

And see that no evil befall me, for Thou art with me.

May Thy rod and Thy staff—The Cross—ever comfort me!

'Tis Thou Who hast prepared this table before me. Let not my enemies afflict me!

May the Chalice of Thy love so inebriate me that I may seek no other satisfaction in life, and that Thy mercy may follow me all the days of my life.

Let me make my dwelling, not only in Thy house, but in Thee: within the wound in Thy Sacred Side; like the " dove in the cleft of the rock," beyond the reach of my enemy and the snares of the wicked huntsman.

Thou art my only Good: Here I am. Come and enrich me.

Thou alone art my King: Here I am. Rule and reign in my heart.

May Thy kingdom come within me!

Thou art my spouse, the bridegroom of my soul: Make me one with Thee.

Be then to me a Saviour!

Give Thyself to my body, to control the fire of my passions.

Take possession of my mind to enlighten it. "*Illumina tenebras meas.*" Dispel the darkness of my mind.

Take and possess my heart, warm and make it like to Thine own.

"Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like to Thine."

Come to me, that I may love all that Thou lovest, and detest what Thou detestest.

Come to me, that, with Thee and in Thee, I may know the Father as I ought to know Him: that I may adore Him as I ought to adore Him: that I may love and serve Him as I ought to love and serve Him.

Dear Master, I shall then disappear and Thou wilt take my place and become the Tenant in this my poor house of clay.

Do Thou use my memory, my understanding and my will. Take, and possess, and dwell in them. I make them over to Thee that Thou mayest orient their every act to Thy Father's greater glory.

Let our thoughts—Thine and mine—our aspira-

tions and longings—Thine and mine—be reciprocal, so that we may fulfil each other's will and each taste of the other's joy and bliss.

Let there ever be, dear Master, as long as I am separated from Thee by this veil of time, a sympathy of union of our two wills.

Each time Thou comest to me strengthen this longing in me till the curtain be raised and Thou stoopest to lift me up to the ecstatic embrace.

Winter will then be past, and trial and travail will be no more.

How incomprehensible, that Thou—The Desired of the Eternal Hills—should not only deign, but even yearn to dwell in me! You seem to come in Holy Communion with all the joy of a bridegroom hastening to meet his bride! I hear You say:

"Come, eat My Bread, and drink the Wine I have mingled for you" (Prov. ix 5).

And again: "I will espouse thee to me for ever" (Osee ii 19).

What condescension! . . . to me! . . . so unworthy! "Emmanuel" seems Your title of choice. When you come with Your grace, how close will be my union with You! It will be a union far closer and lasting than any betrothal of earth. For the latter endures only in time, whilst, unless I am foolish and ungrateful enough to lose Your friendship by sin, I know that Your espousal with my soul will be without end.

We know something of how genuinely good You are to those who *seek* You; but, what words can describe *what You are and will be*, to those who *find* You?

" *Quam bonus Te quaerentibus !*
" *Sed quid invenientibus ? . . .*" (*The* " *Office*," *Feast of the Holy Name.*)

Divine Friend, give me to taste of this bliss.

" If heaven and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built ?
" But have regard to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, O Lord my God:
" hear the hymn and the prayer, which Thy servant prayeth before Thee this day " (3 Kings viii 27-28).

" Till the day break " then, " and the shadows retire, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense " (Cant. iv 6).

Yes! May it be to this mount of self-denial and of sacrifice, and to this hill of burning love, that I shall ever go for strength and comfort, till the day of eternity breaks, and the shadows of time give place to the bright light of Thy kingdom, where I shall *abide* in Thee, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen.

" Let us bless the God of heaven
" and give glory to Him in the sight of all the living
" because He hath shown His mercy to us."
(" *Communion* " *for Trinity Sunday*).

End of Part I

PART II

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

CHAPTER I

THE PRELUDES OF THE SACRIFICE

" Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive
" power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour.
" To Him be glory, and empire for ever and ever. Amen."
(" *Introit*" *of the Feast of the Kingship of Jesus Christ.*)

We shall now, with God's help, enter upon the explanation of the Holy Mass itself.

Having reached the church, or chapel, *in time*, and having seen to the marking of the Missal, let us with recollection commence with the priest that sublime dialogue which begins with the " *Introibo ad altare Dei*," and ends with the " Kyrie eleison."

The Mass opens with the 42nd Psalm. In it, as in the preceding Psalm and others, the Royal Prophet, on fire with the love of God, " in a desert land," as an exile from his true country, yearns—as the stag for the fountains of water—for the happiness of heaven, the vision of the " strong, living God."

" For Thee my soul hath thirsted;
" for Thee, my flesh, O how many ways!
" . . . so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee,
" to see Thy power and Thy glory " (Ps. lxii 2, 3).

It is the thirst for our Creator that brings us, too, to the sanctuary in order to give utterance, *in act*, to the longing of our hearts. This idea is emphasised by the priest's standing *in plano*—down, away from the Altar, and one with the people.

He, too, feels troubled, weighed down by his own failings and trials, as well as by those of the people whom he represents, recognising his unworthiness to approach the Altar of sacrifice.

Hence, his soul, like that of Moses on Mount Horeb, or like that of His Master about to enter His Agony, is agitated. He seems to hear a voice from above:

O priest:
" Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet:
" for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground " (Exod. iii 5).

He remembers, however, that the Lord was propitious to Moses and his people and that He promised to . . .

" Deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians . . . and to bring them to a land that flowed with milk and honey " (Exod. iii 8). He is thus emboldened to proceed.

The thought of the possession of the Object of his desires calls for the expression of the deep joy and alacrity of soul, as well as of the firm hope of attaining to his quest, contained in our Psalm.

Therefore, full of confidence and trust, he begins:

"*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*"

"*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*"

Let us, too, begin everything of importance in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. The sign of the Cross should be a profound act of faith for us. It contains an abridgement of our religion.

In this sign we unite our belief in the Triune God with our Saviour's Incarnation and great Act of love for us on Calvary. This "saving" sign should be replete with unction, and should always be made devoutly and with recollection, out of love for Christ and with trust in Him.

"*Introibo ad altare Dei . . .*"

"*I will go unto the Altar of God.*

"*To God, Who giveth joy to my youth.*"

To what Altar?

The priest has in mind two Altars. The one, *of stone*, at the foot of which he stands, like Jacob at Bethel—the "house of God."

The other, for him, is the "Bosom of the Eternal Word, in the presence of God the Father"; for, shortly after the Consecration he will beg that what has just been offered may *be carried by the hands of*

Thy holy Angel to Thy Altar on high, *in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty.*"

He is about, then, to ascend in spirit to God "Who rejoiceth his youth"; away from the distracting things of earth, to another atmosphere; where, in unbroken peace, and eternal silence, he may, together with the people, becomingly enact this wondrous mystery of praise and thanksgiving to his Maker.

By "his youth" is meant his spiritual life, the supernatural life of grace from the Holy Ghost, Who will replenish his heart with the joy of His Spirit.

His own unworthiness, however, and that of the people, confront him as an insuperable barrier to mount the "Hill of Sacrifice."

"The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God.
"They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together:
"there is none that doth good, no not one" (Ps. xiii 2, 3).
"Who shall give out of Sion the Salvation of Israel?" (*ibid.*, 7).

Nevertheless, to Him alone he looks for strength, saying:

"*Judica me Deus. . . .*" ("*Judge me, O God. . . .*")

"*Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy: from the unjust and deceitful man deliver me.*"

Stand to me, O God, and my cause. Take Thou my cause in hand against my enemies. For . . .

"Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity:
"Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.
"I will come into Thy house;
"I will worship towards Thy holy temple, in Thy fear.
"Conduct me, O Lord, in Thy justice:
"because of my enemies, direct my way in Thy sight" (Ps. v 7-9).

"*Quia tu es Deus, Fortitudo mea . . .*" ("*Since Thou, O God . . .*")

"*Since Thou, O God, art my strength, why hast Thou cast me off? And why do I go sorrowful, while the enemy afflicteth me?*"

For Thou art supreme; and in Thee is my hope and strength. Why then, should my soul be sad? Of whom should I be afraid?

"Lord, why castest Thou off my prayer?
"Why turnest Thou away Thy face from me?" (Ps. lxxxvii 15).
"The Lord is my Light, and my Salvation—my Truth—whom shall I fear?
"The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvi 1).
"Save (me) with Thy right hand and hear me" (Ps. cvii 7).

"*Emitte lucem tuam . . .*" ("*Send forth Thy Light . . .*")

"*Send forth Thy Light and Thy Truth: they have conducted me, and brought me to Thy holy Mount, and into Thy Tabernacles.*"

Yes! Send forth light to the eye of faith; grant to my spiritual vision a clear perception, that it may be as the eagle's, to look upon the effulgence of Thy presence whilst absorbed, within the "Holy of Holies," in the mysteries of this tremendous Sacrifice.

Trembling, the celebrant feels like Jacob, when he said:

"How terrible is this place!
"this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii 17).

Grant that my eye of faith may pierce the gloom and darkness in our pilgrimage on earth.

Grant that these mists that cloud my vision may rise as a veil, to reveal Thy infinite perfections, which we here desire to worthily honour.

Grant, too, that through this clearer insight I and all who *offer* with me, may be enabled to search deeper into the exceeding love for us of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Friend.

And, by the aid of this *Light*—this lamp wherewith to search the heavenly Jerusalem—we beg to be led to Thy truth, that is, to Thyself. For, Thou art Truth (John xiv 6).

And by Thy Light and Truth, we hope to be brought to . . .

"*Thy holy Mount*"—"*in montem sanctum tuum*"—like Moses on Mount Sinai, in close communion with God.

"*et in Tabernacula tua.*" It is unto Thy sanctuary that I have come to offer the august Sacrifice. Here wilt Thou reveal Thyself; and here, too, shall I strive to learn of, and realise, Thy loving-kindness to me.

"*Confitebor tibi in cithara . . .*" ("*I will praise Thee on the harp.*")

"*I will praise Thee on the harp, O God, my God: why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me?*"

"*In cithara.*" On the harp!

"Arise! Arise, psaltery and harp: I will arise in the morning early.
"I will praise Thee, O Lord, among the people:
"and I will sing unto Thee among the nations" (Ps. cvii 4).
"I will sing to the Lord as long as I live:
"I will sing praise to my God while I have my being" (Ps. ciii 33).

Yes, like another David, who "danced with all his might before the Ark," I shall praise Thee. . . .

On the harp of my *lips*: on the harp of my *heart*: and on the harp of my *actions*.

On the harp of my lips:

During the holy Sacrifice, every word will be said with care and reverence, as is becoming at such a sacred function.

"My tongue shall pronounce Thy word; because all Thy commandments are justice" (Ps. cxviii 172).

On the harp of my heart:

Still more with the language of the heart than with that of the lips do I desire to praise Thee. With attention, devotion and fervour shall I endeavour to extol Thy magnificence.

"My heart shall rejoice in Thy Salvation:
"I will sing to the Lord Who giveth me good things:
"yea I will sing to the name of the Lord the Most High" (Ps. xii 6).

On the harp of my actions:

The ceremonies or rubrics of the Mass—more than four hundred in number—will be performed with minute care throughout, as far as mortal may.

"I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes,
"for ever, even unto the end" (Ps. cxviii 112, R.V.).

Every movement in this solemn ceremonial in Thy honour will be a fresh proof of affection: for, "in deeds rather than in words" does love consist.

"*Quare tristis es, anima mea? . . .*" ("*Wherefore sadness, O my Soul?*")

"*Spera in Deo . . .*" ("*Hope in God . . .*")

"*Hope in God, for I will still praise Him, the salvation of my countenance, and my God.*"

"And now what is my hope? Is it not the Lord? . . . and my substance is with Thee."

"Surely," therefore, "in vain is any man disquieted" (Ps. xxxviii 12).

"*salutare vultus mei et Deus meus.*" For, "*Thou art the salvation of my countenance, and my God.*"

"The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us:
"Thou hast given gladness in my heart.
"For Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope" (Ps. iv 7, 10).

"*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. . . .*"

"*Glory, then, be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*"

This "minor doxology," as it is called, should ever be said with earnestness and devotion.

"*Introibo ad altare Dei.*"

Strengthened and emboldened, then, "*I shall go up to the Altar of God,*" for:

"*Our help is in the Name of the Lord . . .*" ("*Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini*") "*Who made heaven and earth.*"

Nevertheless, I shall first confess my "*innumerable sins, offences and negligences*" in the sight of all. . . .

To the Omnipotent God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and to all the Saints . . . *through* my *fault*, *through* my *fault*, *through* my most grievous fault."

"Who," then, "shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord:

"or who shall stand in His holy place?" (Ps. xxiii 3.)
"The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember:
"According to Thy mercy remember Thou me: . . ."
"For Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin: for it is great" (Ps. xxiv 7, 11).

During the "*Confiteor*" the good priest feels his unworthiness. Bowed down in body and humbled in mind for his own misdeeds and for those of his fellow-men, he feels as if he were there under false colours, a hypocrite, and ill deserving to be amongst the innocent ("*inter innocentes*") grouped about the Altar.

He is encouraged, however, on hearing the prayer of the assistants for him in his dejection:

"*Misereatur tui . . .*" "*May the Almighty God be merciful to thee*," they pray, "*and, forgiving thy sins, bring thee to everlasting life.*"

"*Amen*" is his earnest refrain.

The congregation now humbly make the "general confession" of their own sins, reciting the "*Confiteor*" with compunction; and in his turn the priest repeats the prayer—"*misereatur*"—for them and for sinful man; and, making the sign of the Cross, beseeches God, in His mercy, to "*grant pardon, absolution, and remission*" to himself, and to them, for their transgressions.

A fervent "*Amen*" should be the reply of all.

With still further supplications for mercy and to be favourably heard, he prepares, in confidence, to "*go up to the Altar of God.*" And, raising his hands in a final appeal, before quitting those worshipping with him, he says:

"*Dominus vobiscum.*"
("*May the Lord be with you.*")

This invocation he utters from his heart, uniting all that it is possible for human heart to contain of best wishes and blessings for those present and for mankind, in time and in eternity. By it also, he urges the people to recollection.

This salutation of Gabriel to Mary (Luke i 28), of Booz to the reapers (Ruth ii 4)—the usual greeting in Patriarchal times and among the Chosen People—breaks forth from the lips and heart of the celebrant at Mass, no less than eight times.[1]

Sometimes, indeed, he is tempted to ask himself: Are those present aware of his earnest supplication? Do they respond, or is it left to the "servers" to reply?

Blessed Peter Faber seemed to feel there was little or no response from the congregation to his earnest salutation at Mass, or that it lacked warmth; and consequently, he used to call upon the Angel Guardians of those present to breathe, in their stead, the fervent reply:

[1] It is comforting to remember that "good bye"—that is, "God-be-with-ye"—is our form of the same greeting.

"*Et cum spiritu tuo.*"
"*May the Lord be with you also, O priest.*"

May he obsess your soul, that you may in your sublime office, like another Abraham, "Walk before Him and be perfect" (Gen. xvii 1).

Then will it be to him, as the Prophet says:

"And thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back:
"this is the way, walk in it" (Isa. xxx 21).

Within his heart the good priest says:

"I will freely sacrifice to Thee,
"and will give praise, O God, to Thy name: because it is good:
"For Thou hast delivered me out of all trouble" (Ps. liii 8).

Thus consoled at length, he goes up to the . . .

"Altar of incense;" to the "hill of sacrifice."

In Masses "*de Requie*" and in the Masses "*de Tempore*" from Passion Sunday till Holy Saturday exclusive, Psalm xlii is omitted.

"*Aufer a nobis . . .*" ("*Take away from us . . .*")

It is still with fear and trembling that the celebrant approaches the Altar, and begs for greater purity of mind for all; asking: "*that all may be made worthy to enter, with pure hearts, with him, into the 'Holy of*

Holies' " of the New Covenant, to make there the Eucharistic Oblation.

Then, being, as it were, suddenly overawed by his own nearness to the very "*sancta sanctorum*," he utters another ardent prayer, that no vestige of sin may remain on his own soul:

"*Oramus Te, Domine . . .*"

"*We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy Saints, whose relics are here, and of all the Saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen.*"

Whilst reciting this prayer, the celebrant humbly stoops to kiss the Altar, fervently invoking the intercession of the Saints whose relics are entombed in it.

This brings him in thought back to the days of the Early Church, and he is reminded of the steadfastness of the fearless multitudes who sealed their faith with their life's blood.

Had not John "the beloved" seen this in vision at Patmos?

> "And when He—the Lamb—had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."
>
> "And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow-Servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi 9, 11).

Every Altar is to be of stone—*altare lapideum*, Gen. Rub. 20—and consecrated by a Bishop. In the Altar stone is dug a small "sepulchre" in which, encased in a small silver urn, together with three grains of incense, are buried, as in a tomb, the relics—a part of the body—of at least two Martyrs, or Saints, and sometimes a relic of the Saint to whom the church is dedicated.

It is clear, then, that this stone is held as a very sacred object by the Church. It is the emblem in our midst of:

"The stone which the builders rejected;
"the same is become the head of the corner" (Ps. cxvii 22).

It is of this the Prophet spoke when he wrote:

"Thus saith the Lord God:
"Behold I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion,
"a tried stone, a precious stone, founded in the foundation" (Isa. xxviii 16).

The reason for the above is profoundly significant.

In the first ages of Christianity—for some three hundred years, during the ten bloody persecutions at Rome, and elsewhere—priests and people were early astir, often long before daylight, wending their way to the Catacombs outside the City. Here, grouped about their Pastor the Bishop, or perhaps the Holy Father himself, they offered up the Holy Sacrifice under great difficulties.

In one of the long subterranean corridors or galleries they would choose for Altar one of the stone slabs covering the sacred remains of those valiant "witnesses" of the faith.

Upon this rude stone hastily prepared for Altar, and which was surmounted by the Image of the Crucified and two burning tapers, they united, as one voice, in offering the sublime Mysteries.

It was from this living representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, wherein Christ's Death is mystically celebrated, proclaimed, and held in constant remembrance, that these fearless Christians drew the strength to face and triumph over every form of human cruelty and diabolical malice. If we find the

> "Faith of our Fathers living still
> "In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,"

it is in no small measure to these intrepid souls that we owe it.

What a theme, possibly, of interest, this will be to us, when we meet them in the "great beyond"!

How beautiful and encouraging is all this! We are herein reminded that all the sufferings of the Martyrs and of all those who "suffer for justice' sake" are, as it were, welded together, with the sufferings of Christ, and accepted by the Father as an effective sacrifice—effective, because united with that of His Adorable Son.

"It is quite becoming," says St Augustine, "that the Martyrs should receive burial in the place where

Christ's death is daily commemorated, by reason of a certain fellowship in suffering."

On the occasion of this Prayer, and of several others during the Mass, the priest kisses the Altar to honour his Divine Master, whom the Altar represents.

One can only vaguely imagine how tender, trustful and unhesitating were the faith and love of the faithful in the Early Church; the earnestness with which they joined in offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice; their fervour on receiving, and at times taking to their homes, the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar—the very Bread of life—and their calmness, should they happen to fall victims to the hatred or to the whim of the reigning Emperor. Hence their superhuman strength to face danger and hardships, and even martyrdom.

What a debt of gratitude do we not owe these valiant "Soldiers of Christ"! To what inconveniences are *we* prepared to go, in order to offer up the same sacred mysteries ?

Let us enter the church—our Catacomb—when we go to offer Mass, with something of the same devotion as those undaunted "warriors of the Church Militant," who, like their Divine Master, gave up their lives to water Christ's Vineyard—His Church—with their very blood.

Let us, too, with the priest, beg their intercession, that our sins may be blotted out and that we may be more worthy to offer this Sacrifice of petition, praise and thanksgiving.

The Introit

The celebrant now goes to the left, or Epistle, side of the Altar—left, because it is the side towards which the left hand of the Figure of Christ on the Cross over the Tabernacle stretches.

Making the sign of the Cross on himself, he proceeds to read the "Introit"—which is, strictly speaking, the beginning of the Mass—from the Missal, that is, the official Book of the Church in her greatest *action*.

He is reminded of the "Book of the Apocalypse, sealed with seven seals," which no one was worthy to open, but the "Lion of the Tribe of Juda" (Apoc. v 2-5).

Alas! To how many Catholics is not the Missal, and the Mass itself, still as a "Sealed Book"!

The sign of the Cross above referred to is made *over the Missal* in Masses for the Faithful Departed—possibly, to *bless the earth* in which those who "rest in the sleep of peace" repose.

The Introit is the introduction to the celebration of the Mass for any given day or feast. It varies in each Mass like the "Gradual," the "Offertory," and the "Communion." These four belong to the variable component parts of the Mass-rite, and correspond to the idea of joy, hope, sorrow, fear, thanksgiving, praise, etc., of the day, or feast, to be celebrated. They also correspond with the Divine Office which is closely connected with the Holy Mass.

"Like the Breviary," says Dr. Gihr, chapter xxxvi, "this introduction, or formula, of the Mass is also intended to impress and represent from all sides the idea of the Feast or the fundamental thoughts of the Sundays and week days."

As a rule, an antiphon, with the first verse of a Psalm, followed by the Minor Doxology—"*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto*"—with the antiphon repeated, make up the "Introit" to any Mass. Formerly the Psalm was chanted more in full, in processions, or by the choir.

As Cardinal Wiseman writes: "The Introit seems to be intended to be the keynote to the whole service; which being one in its essence, yet adapts itself to all our wants, whether of propitiation or of thanksgiving, whether of evils to be averted or of blessings to be gained. Sometimes this introductory verse is loud and joyous—*Gaudeamus omnes in Domino*—sometimes low and plaintive—*Miserere mihi, Domine, quoniam tribulor*—in the Paschal solemnity the "Alleluia" rings through it all like a peal of bells; in the Passiontide, even the "*Gloria Patri*" is silent, and it falls melancholy and dull; when a Saint is commemorated, the nature of his virtues and triumphs is at once proclaimed; if it be a festival of our Lord, the Mystery which it celebrates is solemnly announced.

To the attentive observer, fond of and familiar with his Missal, these changeable parts of the Mass—including the Epistle and Gospel—will be seen to be

in wonderful harmony in each Mass; and he will be well repaid for the little extra trouble to which he may have gone to perceive the concordance between them.

Mystically, the "Introit" represents the longings, the sighs and the expectations of the Patriarchs and Prophets of Old for the Messias, and this may well explain the repetition of the antiphon, or opening words.

The Chants, Prayers and Lessons of this introductory portion of the Mass are chosen with liturgical feeling and good taste, thus making a harmonious whole. The same idea runs through the parts proper to any Mass; so that the mind, perceiving the inner beauty of it, becomes more and more deeply penetrated with it.

The Kyrie Eleison

At the termination of the "Introit" the celebrant moves to the centre of the Altar to recite alternatively with the attendants the "Kyrie eleison," or "Minor Litany"—"Lord, have mercy . . . on us." He thus concludes that "dialogue" between himself and the faithful, with which the Mass began. It still continues the appeal for mercy and forgiveness, and into it the priest breathes all the earnestness of supplication of which his soul is capable.

This plaint he utters in the spirit of the 101st Psalm. . . .

"Hear, O Lord, my prayer: and let my cry come unto Thee.
"Turn not Thy face away from me: . . .
"For my days are vanished like smoke, and my bones are grown dry like fuel for the fire.
"I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered:
"For I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping. . . .
"For Thou, O Lord, endurest for ever. . . .
"Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion: for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come."

But, *do we* correspond and make the responses to this "Litany," from our hearts? Do we try to make it with the same earnestness and fervour as the priest?

If there be inactivity of soul with us, it is possibly because of the imperfect knowledge we have of our own sins and short-comings.

On one occasion in His public Life (Luke xvii 12), our Lord, accompanied by His Apostles and the usual multitude, was approaching a certain town outside which were a number of lepers in an extreme of misery. Theirs was, surely, a dreary existence; for, we read in Leviticus:

"Now whoever shall be defiled with leprosy . . . shall have his clothes hanging loose, his head bared, his mouth covered with a cloth, and he shall cry out that he is defiled and unclean . . ." (Levit. xiii 45, 46).
"All the time he is a leper he shall dwell outside the camp."

Amongst the clumps of trees on the outskirts of the town, on this occasion, these poor fellows notice what looks like dust rising along the highway leading to the town. This seems something unusual to them and their curiosity is aroused. Soon they can catch the din of voices growing nearer.

In a few moments quite a crowd of people begin to emerge from the wood. And, as the throng grows and approaches nearer, the lepers, "standing afar off," enquire the reason of the presence of such a concourse. "Who is it?" they shout. "What is the matter?"

"THE CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR, is with us," is the reply.

One can picture their astonishment, and readily understand the intense expectancy aroused at this undreamt-of piece of good news. What an opportunity to be made clean! It would not be difficult to imagine the energy they threw into their clamorous appeal for mercy to HIM as He comes into view.

"JESUS, MASTER, HAVE MERCY ON US!" "Do not pass *us* by!"

"C-H-R-I-S-T-E E-L-E-I-S-O-N!"

The Sacred Heart did not pass them by!

How could He? How "quench the smoking flax"? How "break the bruised reed"? . . . though He knew that only one of their number—

and he a stranger!—would return to thank Him for being cleansed.

It is with some such earnestness and holy importunity as this that *we too* should say our . . .

"*K-y-r-i-e e-l-e-i-s-o-n! C-h-r-i-s-t-e e-l-e-i-s-o-n!*"

("*Lord, have mercy on us! Christ, have mercy on us!*")

at Mass.

Are we in less need of mercy and forgiveness than those outcasts? Theirs was a leprosy of the body. Has not ours been—nay rather, is not it—a leprosy of the soul?

Sensible of our unworthiness, let us, then, with great fervour make the same triple appeal, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; raising our voices with that of the priest for mercy and pardon, not only for ourselves, but for all mankind smitten with the scourge of sin.

In early times, the priest, or the deacon, at this point of the Mass read out a list of the needs of the Church or of its members, in a kind of Litany. As each petition was heard the faithful answered *as one voice*, and with great instancy: "Kyrie eleison." They formed but one heart and one soul with the celebrant and with those attending at the Altar.

Alas! Maybe, what a feeble echo of the past is *our* "Kyrie eleison" at the Holy Sacrifice!

One is reminded also, by the recital of the "Kyrie," of our Lord's Parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke xviii 10).

Let the compunction with which the latter, striking his breast, said his "Kyrie eleison"—"O God, be merciful to me a sinner"—enkindle in us the hope of a like hearing to our petitions.

It is worthy of note that neither the "*Confiteor*" nor the "*Kyrie*" is ever omitted at Mass, no matter how joyous the note of the Mass-rite.

The Gloria

"*Gloria in excelsis* Deo . . ." ("*Glory be to God in the highest* . . .")

Having said, or intoned, the "Kyrie eleison," in which he endeavoured to express, both by prayer and gesture, his own unworthiness as well as that of his people, the priest now bursts into that wonderful "paean of praise" the "*Gloria in excelsis Deo.*" It is a hymn of joy and expectancy, of praise and supplication, and has been well called the "Hymn of the Angels."

In itself it is a masterpiece, and one of the treasures of the Liturgy, containing an outpouring of deepest devotion, full of fervour and unction that springs from the depths of the soul.

By it the coming of Christ is early brought into the Holy Mass. We are almost startled by His

sudden appearance amongst us. We are kneeling at the crib in the grotto at Bethlehem at the opening words, and have come, like the shepherds on that first Christmas night, to add our song of praise and thanksgiving to theirs, and to that of the Angels; we have also come to make known our urgent needs.

The Gloria strikes what should be the dominant note of our life. For this purpose it was that Christ, ultimately, came on earth, and it should be the object of our lives here and hereafter.

"Glory be to God on High, and on earth peace to men of good will," heralded by the Angels over the Crib at Bethlehem, was the *world-plan* of God, whilst the newly-born Redeemer was the Light-Centre, *by*, *with*, and *in* Whom all glory to the Father was to emanate.

Seeing then that the chief end or purpose of the Mass is to give honour and glory to our Maker, how very appropriate is the introduction of this Hymn of praise so early in its celebration!

And, as at Christ's birth the heavens parted with song, so should our heart be lifted up in joyful expectation at the renewal of His visit to us.

All present should enter into the recital, or the chanting, of the Gloria as a choir in harmony at the very throne of the Most High, lifting up their voices, *as one voice with that of the celebrant*, and raising, like the Angelic Hosts, a "shout unto God with the voice of joy" (Ps. xlvi 1).

Linked with the chief idea of the Gloria is the

earnest desire for "peace among men of good will." It is mainly through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass that we may attain this blessed gift.

"*Laudamus Te.*
"*Benedicimus Te.*
"*Adoramus Te.*
"Glorificamus Te."

In the prayer, the opening word "*Gloria*" seems to sum up into one expressive term all that is meant by the words that follow, viz:

"*We praise Thee:*
"*We bless Thee:*
"*We adore Thee:*"

and is repeated in the last petition—"We glorify Thee."

"*Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.*"
("*We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.*")

Here again the same yearning is expressed and emphasised, and even enhanced by the added idea of "thanksgiving"—"*Gratias agimus Tibi*"—in which we wish to convey to God our gratitude and delight:

Firstly: That He, our Father, is so sovereignly excellent in Himself, and has been pleased to take unto Himself such great glory. And, for this reason, we, His children, lovingly thank Him.

And secondly: That as *the* great glory of God the Father is His Adorable Son, we desire to voice our thanks for sending Jesus Christ—God's incom-

parable Gift—to us in the Incarnation, as also for His renewal of the same in the Holy Mass.

The thoughtful priest makes this whole prayer one of the most intense and fruitful that he offers, of himself—*ex opere operantis*—to His Maker in the Mass. During its recital, faithfully fulfilling the injunction in the rubrics, five several times he bows down his head in submission where special reverence seems to be called for, or where some particular favour is asked.

In his role of representative on earth, he appeals to his Chief in heaven in a fervent and impassioned entreaty; and, straining every nerve to "get his message through," he begs his Master directly to exercise His office of Mediator on his behalf and on that of his people.

"*Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.*"
"*O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty.*
"*O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son :*
"*O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,*
"*who takest away the sins of the world,*
"HAVE MERCY ON US; *receive our petitions :*
"*Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father,*
"*H-a-v-e m-e-r-c-y o-n u-s !*"

Then by the concluding words, as sparks from a heart on fire, filled with joy and admiration, and in an ardent outburst of Faith, he proclaims the *motive* for his unbounded trust:

"*For* THOU ALONE *art* HOLY:
"THOU ALONE *art* LORD:
"THOU ALONE, O JESUS CHRIST, *with the* HOLY GHOST,
"*art* MOST HIGH *in the Glory of* GOD *the* FATHER.

At the mention of the Three Persons of the Godhead, the celebrant makes the sign of the Cross, whilst breathing a fervent "AMEN" for the favourable hearing and granting of his petitions.

"Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory:
". . . and we give thanks to Thee and we praise Thy glorious name" (1 Paralip. xxix 11, 13).

"*Dominus vobiscum.*"

The Gloria finished, the priest humbly stoops to kiss the Altar, which, as we have seen, represents Christ Himself; and, turning to the assistants, says in a loud voice:

"*Dominus vobiscum*" ("*May the Lord be with you*"), wishing again those present, and mankind in general, everything that is best in time and in eternity.

To this greeting the faithful should respond with the like reciprocity of good wishes:

"*Et cum spiritu tuo.*" ("*And with thy* spirit *also*").

St Chrysostom in the 4th Homily for Pentecost refers the word "spirit" here to that divine overshadowing imparted to the priest at his ordination by the Bishop and assistant clergy, during the "imposition of hands."

This earnest salutation seems also to be a call to even greater recollection on the part of those present, as though the Church wished to emphasise the importance of the prayer of prayers—the Collect—which her minister is about to recite.

It, moreover, forms a kind of bond of union between himself and the congregation. Its repetition at frequent intervals would give the impression of his loneliness and of his unequal task in entering upon such a stupendous undertaking.

Hence, his constant reminder to the people to be all attention, and to second and support him by their union with him in prayer.

The Collect

Returning to the Missal, the celebrant proceeds to read, or rather offer, the prayer, or prayers, assigned for the Mass of that day. Of these, the first is the special one of the feast, or of the Saint whose feast is being celebrated, which has been composed for the occasion, and which is in keeping with the spirit and sense of the mysteries of the ecclesiastical season.

Besides the chief Collect, the other Collects or "commemorations," if any, will be indicated in the Kalendar at the beginning of the Missal.

They are always very devotional, and should be said from the Missal, with great attention; for these, like all prayers, are the fusion of the soul with God by love.

The Collect gathers, as it were, into a focus the desires, the needs and the petitions of the congregation, and indeed of the whole Church—and in a sense of all creatures—which she presents before the throne of God by her representative, her duly ordained minister. He is, one may say, their "Cantor," the Cantor of creation, and their interpreter.

As well as being gems and masterpieces in themselves, the Collects constitute one of the incomparable heirlooms we possess from the Early Church. Not a little of our Catholic doctrine is contained in the prayers of the Liturgy, and especially, perhaps, in the Collects of the Mass. This is in accordance with the well-known saying that, with the Church, "her rule of prayer determines her rule of belief."

"There can be no room for doubt that the prayers of the Church are the accurate embodiment of her belief" (*Catholic Doctrine of Grace*, G. H. Joyce, S.J.).

These prayers are as so many pulsations of the hearts of the holy people who have preceded us through the ages, back to Christ, whose life was in accord with His and with their love of the Church and its liturgical treasures. May our hearts, too, which go to make up the mystical heart of Christ, beat and function through the Church and her Liturgy in unison with the hearts of those who have "gone before us with the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace"!

The beauty of the Collects, their form and power, unfolded by attentive use, could scarcely be over-

rated. Many of them are amongst the oldest prayers in the Liturgy.

"They are masterly, unsurpassable prayers," says Dr. Gihr, "distinguished alike for their solid force and pithy brevity, as for their fragrant charm and imperishable freshness."

In reciting these prayers one feels as if brought into close contact with the glorious Saints and Martyrs who have "won through," greatly owing to the strength gathered at the Holy Mass.

The celebrant says these, as all the Mass prayers, with hands apart and raised on a level with the shoulders, mindful of the early times, when all, priests and people, prayed with outstretched arms, in imitation of their dying Master, as suppliants in the presence of God the Father.

Much of what is here said of the "Collects" may be applied to the "Secret" and to the "Post-communion," which come later in the Mass.

The Collect for any Mass is likewise the prayer which recurs in almost every "Hour" of the Divine Office.

It is, therefore, not only the peculiar prayer for the Mass, but for the whole day. It is thus that the Church directs her ministers to express repeatedly, throughout the day and night, what is nearest to her heart.

It will be of interest to remark that as the Canonical Hours of the Divine Office were a development of the "Vigil"—which itself formed the basis of the

Mass of the Catechumens, that is, the Mass up to the Gospel inclusive—the Canonical Hours become, as it were, the "satellites" of the Holy Mass.

"To maintain a close union between the Canonical Hours and the Mass is to keep to the true spirit of the Liturgy" (Cabrol, *Liturgical Prayer*, p. 58).

No apology is here made for giving the following extract on the Collects from the pen of Cardinal Wiseman (*Essays*).

"There is a fragrance, a true incense in those ancient prayers which seems to rise from the lips, and to wind upwards in soft, balmy clouds upon which Angels may recline and thence look down upon us, as we utter them. They seem worthy to be caught up in a higher sphere, and to be heaped upon the Altar above, at which an Angel ministers. They partake of all the solemnity and all the stateliness of the places in which they were first recited: they retain the echoes of the gloomy Catacomb, they still resound with the jubilee of gilded basilicas, they keep the harmonious reverberations of lofty groined vaults. . . . Nothing can be more perfect in structure, more solid in substance, more elegant in conception, or more terse in diction, than the Collects, especially those of the Sundays and of Lent. They belong essentially to the traditional deposits of the Church. In fact, there is hardly a Collect in which some singular beauty of thought, some happy turn of phrase, is not to be found.

"Each is almost invariably composed of two parts, which may be called the recital and the petition. The first contains either a declaration of our wants,

or a plea for mercy, or for a favourable hearing. Nothing strikes one so much as the noble and appropriate terms in which the Deity is addressed, and the sublime greatness in which His attributes are described. The petition itself is ever most solemn, devout and fervent: often containing depth of thought which would supply materials for a long meditation. . . ."

The Collects enclosing, as they do, such sources of refreshment and recreation for the soul, would, indeed, furnish excellent matter for meditation. But, to how many of our Catholic laity are they not as *hidden* gems ?

Should we not remonstrate, at least, with the man who would stoop to drink the muddy water from a rut on the road, rather than go aside a few steps into the meadow to enjoy the refreshing spring at its source ?

Or, why be satisfied with the light from a candle, when radiant beams of God's own sunlight may so easily be allowed to flood the room ?

The Epistle

The word " Epistle " means a " letter."

Each Mass, or general group of Masses—such as for Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins—has its own allotted, and usually beautifully chosen Epistle.

This distinctive note, in almost all the " ferial "—week-day—Masses will be greatly lost without a Missal.

And, just as we are attentive to the letters we receive from our friends, especially if the latter be distant, so should we try to read, with at least equal care and understanding, the "letters" posted to us each morning in the Holy Mass. They, too, are from distant friends, dearer than any of earth, and should keep our devotedness to the same "mother" as warm as was theirs in the days of persecution.

Let us see to it that our first letter each morning will be that which we receive, and welcome, during the Holy Mass!

The Epistles are mostly taken from the letters of St Paul to the Early Christians, and from the Prophets.

Oh that we could listen to, or read, them with the same rapt attention as did those early disciples of Christ when read for the first time! What a sense of reality would not this lend to the Holy Sacrifice of today!

As it was in no small measure due to these letters, read in the churches and in the Catacombs, that the Christians of those remote times kept their faith, and ever in touch with those who were fighting Christ's battles in other places, the Church, with wisdom of forethought, appointed the same to be read daily at the Holy Mysteries. And thus it is, she supplies her members with spiritual food and enlightenment to meet the enemies of their every-day life.

At the conclusion of the Epistle we should add with the server our earnest . . . "Deo Gratias" ("Thanks be to God") in gratitude to our Creator for this maintenance of the life of the spirit within us.

"*Deo gratias*" is an expression used throughout the Liturgy, and has ever been very dear to the mind of the Church.

The Epistles, or Lessons, for Lent and Advent contain a veritable mine of spiritual wealth which may be easily opened and explored. The Missal supplies the "key."

The Gradual: The Alleluia Verse: The Tract

In their present forms these are short, pithy "verses" taken, for the most part, from the Psalms of David; they will be found exceedingly beautiful and appropriate to the idea expressed in the whole Mass-rite.

What a thrill of delight do we not experience in the Paschal Season as the Church chants her "Alleluias"!

The word "Alleluia" embodies the idea of "praise with joy" to God, or "Jah." Its literal meaning is: "Praise the Lord"; it is found in all Liturgies of whatever tongue.

"Thus," says Dr. Gihr, "in the cry of the Alleluia are the tongues of all nations lifted up in unison to praise and adore God even here on earth

with one voice and one sound, as will most perfectly be done in the world to come."

In general, the Gradual and the Alleluia Verse are used on occasions of great solemnity and rejoicing, whilst the Tract is reserved for seasons of penance and mourning.

The Sequence

The "Sequences" are prayers, for the most part that follow no metrical rule; but, in reality, are as so many excellent sacred songs or odes, containing a depth of devotion and of doctrine, clothed in exquisite language.

Formerly, there were a great number of Sequences; but they have been reduced to five for the more solemn Festivals of our religion. These five have been retained for their rare excellence.

The following are those now in use in the Church:

The "*Victimae Paschali*," for Easter:
The "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*," for Pentecost:
The "*Lauda Sion*," for Corpus Christi:
The "*Stabat Mater*," for our Lady's Dolours: and
The "*Dies Irae*," for Masses "*de requie*."

Some of these incomparable odes have been made the themes for the greatest masterpieces in sacred music the world has produced.

The Gospel

Hitherto we have been giving ear to the words of men—Prophets or Apostles; in the Gospel, we are about to listen to the word of God Himself.

We *stand* at its reading or chanting, as a mark of greater respect, and of readiness to accept, to follow, and defend Christ's message to us from the Father, like the Knights of old, who stood to "attention" with drawn swords, out of honour for the word of God.

At its commencement, let us here again respond, as before, to the fervent salutation of His representative:

"*Dominus vobiscum.*" ("*May the Lord be with you.*")

"*Et cum spiritu tuo.*" ("*And with thy spirit also.*")

As the celebrant announces the name of the Evangelist from whom the hallowed word is taken, let us answer:

"*Gloria tibi Domine*" ("*Glory be to Thee, O Lord*")

making at the same time the sign of the Cross . . .

—on our forehead, to understand and submit to. . .

—on our lips, to proclaim, and

—on our breast, to heartily embrace . . .

the *momentous truths* contained in the exalted message, embodying, as it does, the very Spirit of Christ.

"Put me as a seal upon thy heart," He says to us in the Canticle of Canticles (viii 6).

" For with the heart we believe unto justice;
" but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation " (Rom. x 10).

Of what avail, however, will be the exterior signs made upon our bodies, unless we endeavour to understand and to *follow* the God-sent guidance vouchsafed us in the Sacred Text ?

At the beginning of the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant makes a sign of the Cross on the Missal also, to denote that it is the " Book of the word of Christ," Who sealed His Message by His Blood on a Cross. Was it not from the pulpit of the Cross that Jesus Christ taught mankind the austere, but illuminating, truths of the Gospel ?

At its conclusion, as the priest kisses the Sacred Volume, saying: " *May our sins be blotted out by the words of the Gospel*," let us unite with him, as one person, saying:

" *Laus tibi Christe* " (" *Praise be to Thee, O Christ* ").

The customary greeting " *Dominus vobiscum* " is again made, to which all present should answer as already pointed out.

At Solemn High Mass, the ceremonies at the Gospel are most impressive and replete with meaning.

The catechumens left the church after the reading, or chanting, of the Gospel, leaving the " faithful " to continue the full sacred Rite.

The Credo

After the Gospel, the Church, on all Sundays, Feasts of our Lord and of His Blessed Mother, as also on the Feasts of the Apostles and Doctors of the Church, would have us make a public act of faith.

At the Credo, it has become the custom in some countries to remain standing, to further show a readiness and determination to be steadfast to the principles of Christ, contained in this "formula of our belief." We wish to show that we believe it: that we love it: and that we shall defend—stand up for—it!

The Nicene Creed, which is said at Mass, is a rather full summary of this belief. Its meaning, however, is sufficiently clear, and can be followed from perusal of the Missal.

It would be a great consolation to each of us when about to close our eyes to this world, were we able to say, with intense faith:

"I believe in God the Father: I believe in God the Son: and I believe in God the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Which of us, however, can promise himself even as much as this, in his extreme weakness?

Let us, therefore, *even now*, make the intention, that our accumulated "Credos" said at Mass should stand good to us at that moment of our dereliction, when "the last tear, the fore-runner of our dissolution, shall steal uncontrolled from our eye."

Besides making us more attentive whilst reciting

the Creed at Mass, what a consolation would not such a resolution, faithfully adhered to during our remaining days, afford us as death steals over us!

This our resolve will be renewed each time we stand up to pronounce our act of belief. It will thus become more steadfast and help to smooth the passage of the fast-running sands.

CHAPTER II

THE OFFERTORY, OR BEGINNING OF THE SACRIFICE

All that has preceded in the "Preludes" of the Sacrifice is intended to prepare the soul and purify it, that it may enter more closely into the sublime Action—the re-presentation of the Act of Calvary.

With the Offertory, then, begins the second and final preparation for the actual Sacrifice. Or, more correctly perhaps, it is the first part of the Mass proper, and may be said to embrace that portion of the Rite from the offering made to God of the "matter" for the Sacrifice to the "Secret" inclusive.

As it is now customary for the congregation to sit during the Offertory, there is perhaps a little danger of distraction. This is, however, a part of the Mass that calls for attention, in that it embodies quite a number of ceremonies that are full of significance.

The nucleus of all our Catholic Liturgy, with its unspeakable wealth of beauty and power, the Mass, is a

"Pearl of Great Price":

which, itself, is set among many smaller Pearls that are in themselves inestimable.

With an admonition to join him in prayer—"*Oremus*"—the celebrant recites the "*Offertorium*" or Prayer of the Offertory.

It is composed, commonly, of a few verses of the Psalms: or, of a prayer by the Church, in the form of a plaint, or of an earnest invocation for help; and, like the Introit and the Communion, it is specially chosen to harmonise with the dominant idea of the Mass that is being said.

The verses from the Psalms are merely remnants of the whole Psalms that were chanted in procession in the Early Church whilst the faithful were making their "offerings" at the Altar.

They are always appropriately chosen and are full of charm and unction.

The "*Offertorium*" for the 3rd Sunday after Easter, and that of Palm Sunday, are here given in illustration:

The former is taken from the 145th Psalm, and runs as follows:

"Praise the Lord, O my soul,
"in my life I will praise the Lord:
"I will sing to my God as long as I shall be."

The prayer of the Offertory for Palm Sunday puts before us Christ's complaint to us in His Passion, as prophesied in the 68th Psalm:

"My heart hath expected reproach and misery.
"And I looked for one that would grieve with Me,
"but there was none.
"And they gave Me gall for My food,
"and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

The "*Offertorium*" is a "spiritual jewel," and close attention to it in one's Missal will be well repaid.

After reciting the short prayer of the Offertory, the celebrant then uncovers the Chalice. One might see in this rubric our Divine Lord allowing Himself to be stripped of His garments for the Crucifixion.

The priest next proceeds to the

Oblation of the Bread.

As he raises up the particle of bread on the "paten" and begs that it may be accepted by God, we may place our hearts on the paten, begging likewise that a change may be wrought in them, so that we may become "other Christs," acceptable for the carrying on of His work on earth.

This intention may be made whilst we read from the Missal, or recite, the accompanying prayer . . .

"*Suscipe, Sancte Pater . . .*" ("*Accept, O holy Father . . .*")

"*Accept, O Holy Father, almighty and eternal God,*
"*this immaculate host, which I, thy unworthy servant,*
"*offer unto Thee, my living and true God,*
"*for my own countless sins, offences and imperfections,*
"*and for all here present;*
"*as also for all faithful Christians, living or dead;*
"*that it may avail both me and them unto life everlasting. Amen.*"

The host is called "immaculate" by anticipation of what it is shortly to become at the Consecration.

At the conclusion of the prayer, which is very consoling to the priest himself, he places the bread—*hostiam*—on the corporal, making with it the sign of the Cross.

In this rubric we may see the Lamb of God delivering Himself up to His executioners to suffer and die on the Cross for our transgressions.

The "Mingling" of the Wine and Water

As the celebrant prepares the Chalice and pours into it the wine and water, let us try to catch and better understand the inward significance of the actions prescribed him by the rubrics.

The cleansing of the Chalice might remind us of the purity of heart with which we should approach the holy Mysteries. The following prayer is said whilst pouring into it the wine and water:

"*Deus qui humanae substantiae . . .*" ("*O God, Who in creating . . .*")

"*O God, Who in creating human nature*
"*hast wonderfully dignified it,*
"*and still more wonderfully reformed it;*
"*grant that by the mystical union of this water and wine*
"*we may be made partakers of His Divine Nature*
"*Who vouchsafed to become partakers of our human nature,*

"*Jesus Christ our Lord, Thy Son, Who with Thee and the Holy Ghost*
"*liveth and reigneth one God, world without end. Amen.*"

The wine may be looked upon as symbolising Christ, to represent His Divine Nature; and the drop of water let fall into it, His human nature, and hence, mankind; for, it was of mankind, through our Blessed Lady, that He received it.

In the prayer we beg that, just as the human nature in Christ became united with the Divine Nature by the Hypostatic Union, so a similar change—though in an infinitely lower degree—may be effected within us.

And again, as the water becomes so mingled in the wine as to lose its individual existence, so we pray that we—the drop of water—may become, as it were, "divinised," and assimilated, as far as possible, to Christ, . . . verily *participating in* His Divine Nature.

That we are intended to have a share in the Divine Nature is further borne out in the Preface for the Ascension, in which the Church sings: "Who, after the Resurrection, appeared openly to all His Disciples, and in their presence ascended into heaven to make us *partakers* of His Divine Nature" (2 Pet. i 4).

And in the Offertory for the 4th Sunday after Easter we read: "Who hast made us *partakers* of the one supreme Divinity, by the frequent

celebration and participation of this Holy Sacrifice; grant, we beseech Thee, that as we know Thy truth, so we may live up to it by a worthy conduct of life."

We may also see in the *mystery* of the "mixing of the wine and water" a symbol of the union of Christ with ourselves which will be shortly accomplished on receiving the Blessed Eucharist:

"He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood,
"abideth in Me, and I in him" (John vi 57).

There is also here an allusion to the water which flowed from the Side of Christ on the Cross, as He breathed His last in atonement for our sins.

Was it not, too, with the stream of Blood and water which issued from the Sacred Heart pierced with a lance, that the Church came forth, pure and immaculate, "without spot or wrinkle"?

Moreover, liturgical writers tell us that, in accordance with the custom in the East, our Lord Himself in the Cenacle mixed a few drops of water with the wine in the Cup He was about to consecrate.

How very near we are brought in all this to the Supper Room and to Calvary!

The sign of the Cross over the drop of water would appear to signify the priest's blessing to the faithful present, and even to mankind in general. This sign is omitted in Masses "*de requie*," as the

priest's powers of benediction do not extend to the Faithful Departed.

Moving to the centre of the Altar the celebrant now makes the

Oblation of the Chalice.

Taking the Chalice in his hands, with its contents, the priest, with eyes raised to heaven, makes an offering of it to God in the following words:

"*We offer to Thee, O Lord, the Chalice of salvation,*
"*beseeching Thy clemency,*
"*that it may ascend before Thy Divine Majesty,*
"*as a sweet odour for our salvation,*
"*and for that of the whole world. Amen.*"

Let us, here again, whilst saying this exquisite prayer, place our heart in the golden cup soon to be the "Cup of Salvation," and beg that it may be more and more changed into the likeness of Christ's Heart, and that He may deign to permit us to become, with Him, a part of the Victim about to be offered, "as an odour of sweetness, for our own salvation, and for that of the whole world."

"*In spiritu humilitatis . . .*" ("*In the spirit of humility . . .*")

The sense of his unworthiness, and of that of the assistants, as they draw nearer to the "Holy of Holies," again confronts the priest. He therefore bows down in a prayerful attitude and says:

"*In the spirit of humility, and with a contrite heart,*
"*let us be received by Thee, O Lord,*
"*and grant that the Sacrifice we offer in Thy sight this day*
"*may be pleasing to Thee, O Lord God.*"

In this prayer the mind goes back to the supplication of the three young men captive in Babylon:

"In a contrite heart and humble spirit," they prayed,
"let us be accepted . . .
"and so let our sacrifice be made in Thy sight this day
"that it may please Thee" (Dan. iii 39, 40).

During the recital of this prayer, as in a few others, the priest's hands rest on the Altar, as if to signify that he leans on His Master and looks to Him for support and strength.

Having thus humbled himself, the celebrant now beseeches the Holy Spirit to come and bless the whole sacred Action or Rite.

"*Come, O Almighty and Eternal God—Thou who makest holy—*
"*and bless this Sacrifice, which is*
"*prepared for the glory of Thy holy name.*"

How fitting is this appeal to the Holy Ghost here! Just as it was through His agency, at five words from Mary's heart denoting her co-operation—"*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*"—that Christ

"Dwelt amongst us,"

so this same sanctifying Spirit is here petitioned to be again instrumental in consummating a similar mystery, causing, at the five words the priest will shortly utter—"*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum*"—our offering to "become for us the Body and Blood of the same Jesus Christ."

Again let us unite our entreaties with those of the celebrant.

The above prayer is the only one specially addressed to the Holy Spirit in the course of the Sacred Mysteries.

The Lavabo

Proceeding to the Epistle corner, the celebrant washes his fingers: for, as on many former occasions, his need for purification is still haunting him.

Since the hands represent our actions, the deeds of our will, we are reminded hereby with what innocence and purity of heart we should carry out the august Mysteries. Have those who are present any less need than he of this cleanliness of heart?

Let all, then, with attention, humility and contrition, recite with the priest these words of the 25th Psalm, and try to attune the soul to its sentiments:

"*Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas . . .*" ("*I will wash my hands . . .*")

"*I will wash my hands among the innocent;*
"*and will encompass Thy Altar, O Lord.*"

Hereby, I wish to show my desire for purity of conscience, innocence of life, and readiness to serve with the others—the choirs who were wont to sing in procession—around the Altar of worship.

" *That I may hear the voice of praise,*
" *and tell all Thy wondrous works.*"

That is, that I may give ear to, and relish, the praise of the wondrous works of God, voiced by the accompanying choirs.

The Psalm continues:

" *I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house,*
" *and the place where Thy Glory dwelleth.*"

The " House of God " is as a magnet to my soul. Zeal for God's honour is here kindled, . . . with a sense of gratitude for the gift of the true faith. . . . As we read in Ps. xxvi:

" One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after:
" that I may dwell in the House of the Lord
" all the days of my life."

The Lavabo Psalm proceeds:

" *Take not away my soul, O Lord, with the wicked,*
" *nor my life with men of blood.*
" *Their hands are full of crimes:*
" *their right hand is filled with bribes.*"

Like the Royal Prophet, I too wish to proclaim my dissociation with the deceitful—with the world, the flesh and the devil.

"*But I walk in my innocence: save me and have mercy on me.*
"*My foot stands in an even place:*
"*I will praise the Lord with all the people.*"

With this prayerful Psalm a feeling of confidence grows; and the sense of uneasiness gives way to joy of spirit and thanksgiving:

"My foot is set on the right path, and therefore:
"I shall sing Thy praises in the assemblies of the people with a grateful heart."

We are brought closer to the Passion by seeing, in the Lavabo, Pilate's action in washing his hands, as he condemns Christ to death.

The "*Gloria Patri . . .*" is said at the conclusion of the Psalm as the celebrant, bowing to the Crucifix over the Tabernacle, is about to return to the centre of the Altar.

It is omitted in Masses for the Faithful Departed.

"*Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas . . .*" ("*Receive, O holy Trinity . . .*")

The priest now, bowed down at the centre of the Altar, makes a kind of summary of what the Church would have him offer in Sacrifice, contained in the word "oblation" at the beginning of the prayer.

In it are included the bread and wine shortly to be converted, or consecrated: then, the priest

himself and those present: and lastly, all the members of Christ's mystical body.

The sacrificial gifts—bread and wine—are used as a symbol of ourselves, which, like incense in a golden censer, may sweetly ascend to the Throne of the Most High.

The prayer runs:

"*Receive, O Holy Trinity, this* oblation *which we make to Thee*
"*in memory of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*
"*of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honour of the*
"*Blessed Mary ever Virgin,*
"*of Blessed John the Baptist,*
"*of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul,*
"*of these*"—the Saints whose relics repose on the Altar and in the Altar stone
"*and of all the Saints;*
"*that it may avail to their honour and our salvation,*
"*and that they whose memory we keep on earth may deign*
"*to make intercession for us in heaven.*
"*Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

By this prayer the Church proclaims her desire to fulfil what Christ so earnestly wished, when at His Last Supper He said:

"Do this in Commemoration of Me."

Such a prayer will surely be heard and answered; for no ordinary sacrifice is about to be offered, but

one that the Son of God Himself commissioned us to continue.

After again kissing the Altar as a mark of respect for Christ, turning to the assistants, the priest says the" *Orate fratres . . .*"

" *Orate fratres . . .*" (" *Pray, brethren. . . .*")

" *Pray, brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours*
" *may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.*"

In this entreaty the priest, in a very special appeal, begs the congregation present to pray with him that . . .

" his sacrifice *and theirs* may be acceptable before the Throne of God."

What a consolation to feel that we are so closely united with Jesus Christ and His minister, in the performing of this stupendous Action!

Let all make the response with earnestness:

" *May the Lord receive the Sacrifice at thy hand,*
" *to the praise and glory of His own name,*
" *for our own benefit, and for that of all His holy Church.*"

To this prayer of the assistants the celebrant, in subdued voice, breathes an ardent " Amen."

Sometimes in this prayer we might hear, not His vice-gerent, but Christ Himself as He turns to us,

deigning to beg us to add our offering to His, and to raise ours, in its insignificance, to the dignity of His own, that both He and we may become the acceptable gift, or Victim, or the Sacrifice.

> " For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, (are) all of one. For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren " (Heb. ii 11).

It may be of interest to note that this is the last occasion on which the celebrant turns towards the assistants till after the completion of the Sacrifice.

Moreover, after making this earnest appeal for prayers in union with him, he makes a complete turn, as if to intimate that he is about to leave them, in order that he may enter, alone, the " Holy of Holies."

From the intent of this prayer, one is reminded of St Peter's eulogy of the Early Christians:

> " Be you also as living stones built up,
> " a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,
> " *to offer up spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ " (1 Pet. ii 5).

And again in verse 9:

> " But you are a chosen generation, *a kingly priesthood*,
> " a holy nation, a purchased people."

Herein, the chief of the Apostles congratulates the people on their dignity through Baptism and Confirmation. For all, by becoming Christians, are in a peculiar sense raised to the priesthood

through such an intimate union with Christ, our High-Priest.

In St John, too, we read:

"For Jesus Christ hath made us—the people—a kingdom and priests to God" (Apoc. i 6); a thought which he reiterates in chapter v, verse 10.

With what attention should we not *join in offering* the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, putting into execution as well as we can the means by which we are best able to glorify God and fulfil our own destiny here and in the life to come!

The "Secret"

The "Secret," or "prayer of oblation," is the second of the three ancient prayers in the Mass-rite for any given day. Unlike the "Collect" and the "Postcommunion" it is said in a low voice, hence, possibly, its name.

Nearly all the Secret prayers ask for the blessing and gracious acceptance of the sacrificial gifts—that is, *the bread and wine with a view to their being converted into Christ's Body and Blood*; and also that God in return would deign to shower upon us His supernatural favours.

"Graciously hear our prayers, O Lord," we read in the Secret for Candlemas Day; "and that the gifts we offer in the sight of Thy majesty may be worthy, grant us the help of Thy loving-kindness."

And again, for Trinity Sunday:

"Hallow, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, by the invoking of Thy holy name the victim which is here offered up; and by its means make of us too a perfect gift to Thee for evermore."

Besides the Secret proper to the Mass, there may be others to be said, by way of commemoration, as we have seen with the Collects. They will be indicated in the Missal at the Mass for the day, or in the Kalendar at the beginning of the Missal.

At the termination of the Secret, or Secrets, the priest raises his voice as if, coming out of an ecstasy, he would ask the assistants to unite with him and respond by an earnest "Amen," in answer to his final:

"*Per omnia saecula saeculorum.*" ("... *For ever and ever.*")

With this exclamation and its response, the Offertory terminates, and the Preface commences.

By the "Amen" here we intend not only to concur with what has just been asked for in the Secret, or Secrets, but also to heartily approve of all that was done throughout the Offertory.

CHAPTER III

THE PREFACE, OR IMMEDIATE PRELUDE OF THE SACRIFICE

HAVING said their "Amen" to what was petitioned for in the Offertory and Secret, the assistants now join with the priest in a short, but impressive, dialogue, as a foreword to the Preface.

Turned towards the Altar, absorbed like another Moses "in the cloud, face to face with God," the celebrant recites the following introductory versicles which come to us from apostolic times:

"*Dominus vobiscum.*" ("*May the Lord be with you.*")

To which all should again reply, as earnestly as possible:

"*And with thy spirit also.*" ("*Et cum spiritu tuo.*")

Then, feeling the awful sacredness of the office he is about to fulfil, he raises his hands in a motion full of solemn appeal, and admonishes the people to:

"*Raise up their hearts to God*" ("*Sursum corda*") —an earnest, concentrated aspiration from the Lamentations of Jeremias.

"Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens" (Lament. iii 41).

"*We have lifted them up to the Lord*," is the response. ("*Habemus ad Dominum.*")

Thus encouraged, the priest adds:

"*Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.*" ("*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!*")

To which the congregation heartily reply:

"*It is meet and just.*" ("*Dignum et justum est.*")

The foreword to the Preface being thus concluded, the celebrant now begins to recite, or chant, the Preface proper. . . .[1]

Taking up with eagerness the refrain of the last response, "It is truly meet and just," the celebrant solemnly begins the inspired prayer—the Preface proper—with the utmost attention possible to a human being.

"It is," says Dom Cabrol, "undeniably, one of the most beautiful prayers in our Liturgy."

With the priest, all ought to strive with intense earnestness to enter into the spirit of the various Prefaces as they present themselves in the ecclesiastical year.

There are now fourteen in use for the Church's manifold Seasons and Festivals.

They are incomparable chants of praise and

[1] In regarding the Preface as a prelude to the Canon, we are here following the present arrangement, or disposition, of the Missal. There are not wanting, however, good reasons to consider the Preface as being *part of the Canon*, and not merely its introduction.

thanksgiving, which the Church places on the lips of her minister, mindful that her Divine Spouse "gave thanks" before changing the bread and wine into His Body and Blood, at the Last Supper.

Very briefly and in general, the Prefaces call upon the congregation to . . .

"*Always, and in all places,* GIVE THANKS TO GOD,"
our "Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God,"
"for His many Gifts to us,
"Through JESUS CHRIST."

In doing this, the Church, through her representative, closely imitates her divine Spouse, in Whose Soul the dominant note:

"Eternal Father, I give Thee thanks,"

ever stood out, in endless song, clear and re-echoing.

And so, it is through HIM that
the whole Heavenly Host,
Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominations, Powers,
Virtues, Cherubim and Seraphim,
(in whom the Godhead seems best reflected),
as well as ourselves, and whatever of beauty earth contains—
in a word, ALL CREATION—
unites its voice in one grand, universal outburst of PRAISE:

"SANCTUS: SANCTUS: SANCTUS!"

"HOLY: HOLY: HOLY! *Lord God of Sabaoth!*
"*Heaven and earth are filled with Thy Glory.*
"*Hosanna in the highest!*"
(Isa. vi 3; Apoc. iv 8.)

Whilst reciting these seraphic words in honour of the Most Holy Trinity, the priest, overawed, lowers his voice in his unworthiness to join at all in so sacred a Song, with mortal lips.

At the thrice-repeated "Sanctus" the little sanctuary bell rings out for the first time, sweetly appealing for attention, and as a warning for the approaching Canon.

"*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini: Hosanna in excelsis.*"
"*Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Ps. cxvii 26).
"*Hosanna in the highest*" (Matt. xxi 9).

As he recites these words, the celebrant stands erect again as if to manifest his readiness to meet His Redeemer about to descend to the Altar at the Consecration. At the same time he makes the sign of the Cross, to denote that it was by this victorious sign that Christ came into possession of our souls.

We are reminded in the Preface of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when the City rang out with acclamations of joy:

"Hosanna to the Son of David: Hosanna in the highest!"

In this sublime prayer there seems to be an overwhelming desire on the part of the Church to bring together all that is greatest and noblest in God's creation—in heaven and on earth—in order to sing the praises of the Blessed Trinity, in one concerted effort.

There grows in our hearts an ardent wish that the very Cherubim and Seraphim, in their heaven of heavens, might take up the refrain in a united chorus, voicing our urgent desires before the throne of God; for it is an office rather befitting the spirits who assist at that throne than any of earth.

The Preface is a consoling and satisfying prayer and may be called our maximum effort. In it we would bring to a focus our share, or counterpart, of the great Action we are about to perform in the . . .

Sacred Name of Jesus Christ:

Whose Sacrifice as far excels the greatest demonstration of all united creatures—Angelic and human—as the light of the sun the lighted taper on the Altar, as the heavens the earth.

Our limitations, however, will not cast us down, nor turn us from our purpose; nay rather, will not our ardent desire be the better heard *because of* their humble acknowledgement?

> "And Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering" (Isa. xl 16).

In the Preface, we feel as if obeying the voice of this same great Prophet:

"Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good tidings to Sion:
"lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem:
"lift it up, fear not.
"Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God" (Isa. xl 9).

From the same cleansed lips we hear the recompense:

"Behold His reward is with Him and His work is before Him.
"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:
"He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young" (Isa. xl 10, 11).

Read from your Missal, and ponder, the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Easter.

"Come, let us praise the Lord with joy," David tells us:
"let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour.
"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
"and make joyful harmony to Him with psalms" (Ps. xciv 1, 2).

CHAPTER IV

THE CANON, UP TO, AND INCLUDING, THE CONSECRATION

HAVING in the Preface, in imitation of Christ at the Last Supper, given solemn thanks to God for His many graces and blessings, we now enter upon the Canon, or fixed and invariable part of the Holy Sacrifice, which ends with the prayer preceding the "*Pater noster.*"

In the Missal, the initial letter "T" of the "*Te igitur*"—the opening words of the Canon—by degrees was evolved into the shape of a cross. It was then further expanded into a Crucifix. This again became more and more elaborated as time went on, till the opposite page was used, and the idea finally developed into a full-page representation of the Crucifixion, as we now have it in our larger Missals.

We are brought in the Canon both to the Supper Room, and to the foot of the Cross on Mount Calvary.

Every alien thought should, as far as possible, be excluded, so as to focus our whole attention on the sacred Drama of the proof of our Redeemer's infinite love for us, which is now about to be re-enacted.

The Canon is said in secret, out of respect due to so sacred a memorial-Action.

In this humble effort, we must confine ourselves to an almost bare recital of the prayers in the Canon, omitting mention of many rubrics, genuflections, etc., that are of concern rather to the priest.

"A whole volume," says Dom F. Cabrol, O.S.B., "would not suffice for a commentary on them."

The Canon opens with the prayer "*Te igitur . . .*"

"*Te igitur, clementissime Pater.*" ("*We therefore beseech . . .*")

"*We therefore beseech Thee:*" "Therefore" here sums up all that has preceded in the "Preludes"—the Offertory and the Preface.

The prayer runs:

"*We therefore humbly pray and beseech Thee*"—here the celebrant kisses the Altar, out of reverence for Christ:
"*Most merciful* (*clementissime*) *Father,*
"*through Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord,*
"*that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to accept and bless*
"*these ✠ gifts*—which we possess from God,
"*these ✠ presents*—which we offer of ourselves to Him,
"*this ✠ holy unspotted sacrifice*—holy and immaculate by anticipation, separated and set aside for use at the Altar;
"*which, in the first place, we offer Thee for . . .*

"THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, *to which vouchsafe . . .*
"*to grant peace; as also . . .*
"*to protect,*
"*to unite and*
"*to govern it throughout the world, together with*
"*Thy Servant N.—our Pope,*
N.—our Bishop, as also . . . all orthodox professors of the Catholic and Apostolic faith."

"*Memento, Domine, famulorum, famularumque tuarum . . .*"

This prayer contains the "Commemoration of the living," and in it are enumerated the special intentions—primary and secondary—for which the Mass is about to be offered.

"*Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women*"—here the priest prays a little while for those for whom he is asking favours through the Mass:
"*and of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee*
"*for whom we offer*"—"we," *i.e.*, the officiating ministers—
"*or who, themselves,* offer *to Thee, this Sacrifice of praise,*
"*for themselves, their families and their friends,*
"*for the redemption of their souls,*

"*for the hope of their safety*—health and protection in life:
"*for their salvation*—their final perseverance:
"*and for which they now pay their vows*—i.e., their good intentions, desires—all, in a word, that is best in them:
"*to Thee, the Eternal, Living and True* God."

"*Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, and of* all *here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee.*"

What was not the signification of this "memento," when breathed to God in the silence and feeble light of the Catacombs by the Christians of the Early Church? . . . when the rude Altar was surrounded by many who were not unlikely to become, themselves, Martyrs for the faith?

What unction, moreover, and emotion in the recital! What intense earnestness in their appeal! And what a contrast, one is tempted to think, to the weak-kneed "faith and devotion" of many who surround the Altar at the same Sacred Mysteries today!

Upon the careful recitation, or perusal, of this "Commemoration of the Living," one cannot but be struck at the clearness with which the Church wishes her members to feel and realise how closely they should *unite themselves with the celebrant at the Altar.*

From the wording of the prayer it is evident that those present at Mass are to regard themselves as

Co-Offerers with the priest, and, we may add, with Christ Himself.

" You are a chosen generation, *a kingly priesthood*, " a holy nation, a purchased people " (1 Pet. ii 9).

That our good people should realise this—increasingly if possible—is, to a great extent, the purpose of this little work in their regard.

Infra Actionem

These two words in the Missal at this juncture warn us that we have come to the " place of trial " in which our Redeemer is about to plead His cause—and ours—before the Father; that we are within the very precincts of the " Holy of Holies " and are now but a few steps in space, in time a few moments, from the witnessing of our Blessed Saviour's Masterpiece of Love.

Our Eucharistic Oblation is an *Act of Thanksgiving*. It is by this Act, rather than by the words or the prayers, that we give praise and honour to our Creator in the Mass.

" *Communicantes* . . ." (" *Communicating with* . . .")

How wistfully the Church reminds us here that in this Offering from her humble Altar we are not by any means alone, nor, as it were, relying merely on ourselves. No! We are united in our sacred

quest with the bosom friends of God who have gone before us.

Nor is this all. We are not only in union—communion—with them, "Communicantes," but we further *wish to honour them* for their heroic lives, keeping their memory ever fresh in our minds and striving to *imitate them*.

Thus to honour them is also to help ourselves; for we trust they may speak in our behalf before the august throne.

Not satisfied with generalisation, the Church proceeds to name those of her children whom she specially wishes to invoke and revere:

"*Communicating and reverencing*
"*in the* first *place*,
"*the memory of the ever-glorious Virgin Mary*,
"*Mother of God and our Lord* JESUS CHRIST; for it was she who was most closely joined with HIM in our ransom, and with whom we are about, presently, to stand, at the foot of the Cross."

Here are enumerated twelve Apostles, and twelve Roman Martyrs:[1]

"*and of all Thy Saints;*
"*by whose merits and prayers grant that we may be always defended by the help of Thy grace and protection.*
"*Through the same Christ our Lord.*
"*Amen!*" "*So may it be, O God!*"

[1] "Martyrs." "A proof of the antiquity of the Canon, for it was not until the fourth century that the Church instituted feasts in honour of the other classes of saints" (O'Brien, *History of the Mass*).

The following is the list of the twelve Martyrs mentioned:

Linus : first Pope after St Peter	23 September.
Cletus : second Pope after St Peter	26 April.
Clement : fellow-labourer with St Paul ...	23 November.
Xystus : died under Valerian, A.D. 258	6 August.
Cornelius : Pope, A.D. 254-255	16 September.
Cyprian : A.D. 258	16 September.
Lawrence : A.D. 258	10 August.
Chrysogonus : A.D. 303 (?) died under Diocletian	24 November.
SS. John and Paul : brothers	26 June.
SS. Cosmas and Damian : brothers	27 September.

The two last prayers, "*Memento, Domine*," and "*Communicantes*," have been a kind of interruption in the petitions of the first prayer of the Canon, "*Te igitur*." The idea there contained is resumed in the . . .

"*Hanc igitur . . .*" ("*We therefore beseech Thee . . .*")

The priest extends his hands over the Chalice, whilst, with unbounded confidence, he recites this prayer.

His being in company with the "ever-glorious Virgin Mary," the Apostles, the Martyrs and all the Saints, makes him very hopeful of "getting his messages through." He feels that his hands are, as it were, covered, as were Jacob's, so as to appear like Esau's.

"The voice indeed is the voice of Jacob;
"but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Gen. xxvii 22).

The promises were fulfilled through Jacob, a type of Christ, Whom the priest now represents in a very special way.

It is a solemn moment. The sanctuary bell again rings out to rivet attention on the approaching Consecration.

This rubric and rite, of extending the hands over the victim, signify our desire that God would take possession of the "offerings," wholly consecrated to Him. It also brings us back to the sacrifices of the Old Testament, when the priest held his hands over the head of the animal to suffer death, as a vicarious victim, transferring to it the sin and guilt of mankind.

Jesus Christ is our VICTIM *par excellence*, and alone capable of obtaining pardon for our transgressions.

"Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.
"He was wounded for our iniquities,
"He was bruised for our sins . . ." (Isa. liii 4, 5).

In this "*Hanc igitur*" prayer, the celebrant is emboldened to ask for big favours. . . .

"*We therefore beseech Thee, O Lord,*
"*graciously to accept this oblation of our service,*
"*as also of Thy whole household*—that is, of all the faithful;
"*dispose our days in Thy peace*—not the world's brand, but the peace which 'surpasseth all understanding';

" *command*—note the confidence shown—
" *that we be delivered from eternal damnation*—
a grace reiterated in the following petition . . .
" *and numbered in the flock of Thy elect*—our crowning grace.
" *Through* CHRIST *our Lord.*
" *Amen !*" " So, O Lord, may it come to pass!"

One is almost startled at the directness of the petitions enumerated. Father Chaignon quotes the following passage from Father Lebrun: "No one knows the number of the elect; but it may be said that a sure mark of election is manifested by the priest who enters into the spirit of these holy prayers, wishes for nothing but the peace of God, fears nothing but eternal damnation, and earnestly prays to the Lord for grace and protection to persevere to the end."

Why should not all present be imbued with the same sentiments ?

" *Quam oblationem, Tu Deus . . .*" (" *Which oblation, do Thou . . .*")

" *Which oblation*—the bread and wine together with our sighs, our desires and yearning;
" *do Thou, O God, vouchsafe in all things to make . . .*
" ✠ *blessed*—consecrated;
" ✠ *approved*—wholly dedicated to Thyself;
" ✠ *valid*—confirmed, sanctioned and irrevocable;
" *reasonable*—unlike the irrational victims of the Old Law;

" *acceptable*—a pleasing offering in Thy sight:
" *that it may be made for us the* . . .

" ✠ Body and ✠ Blood of Thy Most Beloved Son,

" Jesus Christ our Lord."

When one remembers what a stupendous favour we here ask, he is struck by the simplicity of the last petition of this prayer. What greater request could possibly be made than that God might vouchsafe that

" the bread and wine . . . may be made . . .
(*fiat*) . . . for us . . .
" the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ "?

One might expect here more pomp and display, that the approach of His Majesty the King of heaven and earth should be heralded visibly by the heavenly hosts, as happened at His birth, or as will take place at His second coming.

It is not so, however. It is in peace and tranquillity that He deigns to come down upon our Altars, as it is, indeed, in quiet that He sends us all His best gifts, whether temporal or spiritual.

" *Fiat* " was the word used also by Mary at the Incarnation:

" Be it done to me according to Thy word."

And again, it was used in the beginning, when God said:

" *Fiat lux* " (" Let there be light "), without display or parade.

So here, too, the priest pronounces calmly—but with awe—the same "*fiat.*" That the "*oblata*" may become for us . . .

Christ's very Body and Blood!

The Consecration of the Host, and the Elevation

The better to realise the great Action that is about to be accomplished, the Church here leads her minister to the scene in the Supper Room, on the evening before the first Good Friday. She puts on his lips the following prayer in grateful *remembrance* of her Divine Redeemer in the Cenacle, when His Soul seemed beside Itself to accomplish the very "love-dream" of His Life. It is the last prayer before the Consecration. Reason and sight yield to faith; for we are in the "domain of faith," which, like grace, can come from God alone.

"*Qui pridie quam pateretur . . .*" ("*Who, the day before He suffered . . .*")

"*Who, the day before He suffered,*
"*took bread into His holy and venerable hands :*
"*and with His eyes lifted towards heaven,*
"*giving thanks to Thee, Almighty God, His Father,*
"*He ✠ blessed it*—thereby effecting what the blessing signified—
"*brake it, and . . .*

"*gave it to His disciples, saying*—in the very words of Christ, and almost making use of His lips . . ."

"Hoc est enim corpus meum."

"For this is My Body."

The tiny bell intimates the miraculous change to the worshippers.

As the celebrant raises the Body of Christ—once lifted up on Calvary's Mount—and, together with the Angels who crowd around, adores the Saving Victim, let us *with the greatest possible attention* add our adoration to his and to theirs, thanking Him from our hearts and giving Him a warm welcome amongst us again.

We are counselled, too, reverently to lift our eyes to gaze upon our Redeemer's Body when thus raised up by the celebrant. . . .[1]

"Lift up your gates, O ye princes,
"and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates:
"and the King of Glory will enter in.
"Who is this King of Glory?
"The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory" (Ps. xxiii 9, 10).

[1] By a Rescript of June, 1907, Pius X granted an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines to the faithful who—with faith, piety and love—look upon the Sacred Host at the Elevation or when solemnly exposed and say with St Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

The Elevation vividly commemorates the raising up of Christ on the Cross, and may be said to be for us the " Manifestation of the death of the Lord, till He come " . . . at the Judgment (1 Cor. xi 26).

If the priest, as we have seen, begged that his heart and lips might be cleansed, as with a burning coal, in order worthily to *read the Gospel*, *what purity* is he not in need of now to be the instrument in the hands of God *to change the bread and wine* into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ His Son!

What grace does he not require who has been chosen to be the vice-gerent, the living mouthpiece of Jesus Christ, and morally *identified* with HIM, the Second Person of the Godhead!

Here at the Holy Mysteries one may, in mind, either construct the scene at the Last Supper in which Christ changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood (for the priest recalls the circumstances of this scene, goes through the same actions as Christ, and pronounces His self-same words), and look on in wonderment with the Apostles at the re-enactment of the same miracle being wrought for us; or, he may go off in spirit to Calvary and there kneel at the foot of the Cross, with Mary, and John, and Magdalen, lost in contemplation at his nearness to the Crucifixion.

Or again: one might be in the Supper Room in spirit till the words of Consecration are pronounced, and then at the foot of the Cross as the Sacred Species are raised up for adoration.

The Consecration of the Chalice

Having said the words of Consecration over the bread, the celebrant proceeds to consecrate the wine in the Chalice. As he does so he reiterates, simply and with suitable gestures, our Lord's actions at the Cenacle when He changed wine into His Precious Blood.

" *Simili modo . . .*" (" *In like manner, after He had supped . . .*")

" *In like manner, after He had supped,*
" *taking also* this *excellent Chalice*
" *into His holy and venerable hands,*
" *also giving* Thanks *to Thee,*
" *He ✠ blessed It*—the blessing of the priest, in virtue of the rite itself, accomplishes the act signified as unerringly as that of Christ Himself on the eve of His Passion :
" *and gave It to His disciples, saying :*

"Accipite, et bibite ex eo omnes.
"Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei,
"Novi et aeterni testamenti,
"Mysterium fidei,
"Qui pro vobis et pro multis
"Effundetur in remissionem peccatorum."

"Take and drink ye all of this.
"This is the chalice of my blood,
"Of the new and eternal testament,
"The mystery of faith,
"Which shall be shed for you and for many
"Unto the remission of sins."

Herein, says Bishop Hedley (p. 134), he "causes the Precious Blood to flow afresh and to make the Church and Altar as truly a gate of heaven to each and all as if they stood by the Cross of Christ Himself." What appreciation should we not have of our Heirloom!

As the priest adores the Precious Blood and raises It above his head for the adoration of the faithful, the little bell tinkles again to fix the attention of all on the accomplishment of this truly wonderful mystery.

In the Mass we drink in long draughts of the spirit of Jesus and especially of the spirit of His hidden and suffering Life.

Though in the Consecration by a mortal man there is a great exercise of our faith, it is comforting to know and to remember, that when our Divine Lord Himself changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood, *no external change* took place. The appearances of bread and wine remained the same as before. Our faith is no more tried than was that of the Apostles in the Cenacle. No one of them doubted.

As before, we may transfer ourselves, in spirit, either to the Supper Room or to Golgotha, or to each in turn.

In the Supper Room we may see our Divine Master with the Twelve. His cheeks are more than usually aglow by reason of the greatness of

THE GIFT OF GOD

which His Father sanctioned His leaving us, and

by reason of the fulfilment of the long-yearned desire of His Life.

Was it not "with desire He had desired to eat THAT Pasch with His Apostles"?

Tonight, it is LOVE! Tomorrow, it will be SACRIFICE!

"By ancient right, love and suffering go together. There is no wooer but he is a sufferer, no lover but he is a martyr" (Blessed Henry Suso).

At the Consecration of the Chalice one is naturally reminded of the words of God to Moses and the Chosen People, in the Book of Exodus:

"and I shall see the blood, and shall pass over you:
"and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you" (Exod. xii 13).

From the form of the words which, through her tradition, the Church puts on the lips of her minister at the Consecration of the Precious Blood, one may read her mind with regard to the mental picture which occupied the very depths of the Being of Christ at this supreme moment. She would seem by it to wish to connect our Covenant, or Testament, with that which was made between God and Moses, who was speaking for the Chosen People (Exod. xxiv 7 *seqq.*; see Heb. ix 20).

In this chapter of Exodus we read that Moses . . . "taking the book of the covenant, read it in the hearing of the people;" and a covenant, a testament

or bilateral contract, was entered into, ratified and concluded.

"And he took the blood . . . of the pacific victims of calves,

"and sprinkled it upon the people," thereby ratifying and sealing the Covenant, or Testament, between God and themselves.

Here, Moses was the "spokesman" for the Children of Israel. It was through him that they entered upon the solemn Contract, which, in a broad sense, embodied the Old Testament. It was a Contract binding on both parties—on Jehovah and on the Hebrew People.

Moses was their representative, and also a "type" of The Christ, Who is for us the New Moses or Mediator, before the Throne of our God.

And now, our Divine "Spokesman," on the eve of His death, is about to enter into a solemn Compact, or Covenant, with His Heavenly Father in our regard. Nor will it be only a Compact; but also a Legacy—a better Testament than before, a Covenant of grace (Heb. viii 6).

Our Saviour is about to fulfil in His Person the reality of which the covenant of Moses was but a figure. Not with the blood of calves, He intimated to His Apostles, but with My Own Blood do I sprinkle you tonight. That of Moses wrought but an outward cleansing. I wish you to receive My Blood *within you*, that your hearts and souls may be purified with a holiness that is real and altogether interior.

Certain articles, or terms, are to be established and agreed upon. It is as a bilateral contract, binding, in a way, on the Father, and on the Christian People whom Christ here represents.

Father, upon the pouring out of My Blood, He would intimate . . .
Heaven is to be opened:
Thou shalt pardon the transgressions of My people when they call upon Thee in My name:
Thou art to receive them back to Thy grace and friendship:
to imprint Thy law in their minds: and . . .
bestow upon them Thy infinite and eternal Love!
For, Thou, O Father, hast promised, by the lips of Thy Prophet:
" But this shall be the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days: . . .
" I will give My laws into their mind,
" and I will write it on their heart:
" and I will be their God,
" and they shall be My people " (Jer. xxxi 33; see also Heb. viii 10 and x 16).

And again, as we read in Ezechiel:

" And I will make a *Covenant of peace* with them,
" it shall be an *everlasting* Covenant with them:
" and I will establish them, and will multiply them,
" *and will set My Sanctuary in the midst of them for ever,*
" and My Tabernacle shall be with them " (Ezech. xxxvii 26-27).

Then it is that our Divine Advocate pours out, not the blood of animals, but His own Sacred Life-Stream, anticipating the great Act of the morrow, and thereby does He ratify, conclude, and seal the Solemn Pact, and establish the . . .

NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT:

in which to live and die

is at once our privilege and our right.

"*This is the Chalice of My Blood*," the priest solemnly says,

"*of the New and Eternal Testament*"—New, for the Old now ceases to exist—Eternal, for there will be no other; and because it will endure for ever.

"Now in saying a new covenant, He hath made the former old" (Heb. viii 13).

This New Testament quite eclipses the Old, covering it as with a mantle of oblivion. It was also for us a priceless "legacy," which embodied a more sublime Priesthood.

"But now He hath obtained a better ministry,
"by how much also He is a Mediator of a better Testament,
"which is established on better promises" (Heb. viii 6).
"And therefore He is a Mediator of the New Testament:
"that by means of His death . . . they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. ix 15).

"*The Mystery of faith.*"

This Mystery of faith is the very touchstone of our belief. "These words," says Dr. Gihr, "indicate the unsearchable depth and obscurity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice."

It is the test of faith today, as it was with those to whom our Lord revealed His new doctrine, so incomprehensible to unaided mortal mind. For, we read:

"After this many of His Disciples went back:
"and walked no more with Him.
"Jesus then said to the Twelve:
"Will you also go away?
"and Simon Peter answered Him:
"Lord, to whom shall we go?
"Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi 67-69).

The Holy Mass is itself the Mystery of faith, and blessed indeed are we who have been favoured with the lamp of faith, to search and comprehend even something of this sacred Mystery of our Religion, and to illumine our path to the very throne of the Most High!

"*which shall be shed for you. . . .*"

Here we have the special application of the Act of Calvary brought down through the ages to the priest and ourselves—co-offerers with him and with Jesus Christ—in this priceless Heirloom.

The Sacrifice of the Cross was for all, that of the Mass is more especially for the faithful.

"*and for many.*"

That is, besides those who are present, there are many others, who will certainly share in the redeeming graces of "Calvary through the Mass."

"*unto the remission of sins.*"

Though it is the province of the sacrament of Penance directly to remit sin, nevertheless, on account of the proximity of the re-enactment of the Crucifixion at Mass and of the intensity of compassion elicited for Christ in His Passion, the grace of repentance for serious sins may be granted, as also sorrow sufficient for the forgiveness of venial transgressions awakened in those who earnestly offer Mass, because, like Magdalen, they have "loved much."

The Eucharistic Blood is at once the most precious portion and treasure of the Church; a Mystery of faith priceless beyond human conception. It may be called the "Hidden Treasure" and the "Pearl of Great Price" of the Gospel.

Alas that it is still so hidden, even from many who "attend" at these holy Mysteries, or who merely "hear" Mass!

In the Mass we have the mystery of mysteries . . . that God's regard for man went so far as to *love* him (!) and to love him so far as to sanction the shedding of the Blood of His Adorable Son for his(!) ransom; and authorises us still to continue this same Immolation, for mankind!

" Knowing that you were not redeemed
" with corruptible things as gold or silver,
" but with the Precious Blood of Christ,
" as a Lamb unspotted and undefiled " (1 Pet. i 18, 19).

With reverence, then, at the Consecration of the Chalice, let us bow down in adoration, renew our faith in His presence, beg for forgiveness, and offer ourselves and all we have together with the Divine Victim, to the Heavenly Father, to belong wholly to Him.

We said above that an alternative method of spending the time at the Consecration of the Precious Blood might be to go in spirit to Calvary and live the Sacred Drama again.

This will suggest to us to make not only, as we have just said, an act of faith, but also an act of submission with regard to our trials, sufferings and crosses in life. For, looking thus upon our Divine Preceptor's sufferings and dereliction at Mass, are we not helped to " fathom the role of suffering, to solve the riddle of pain," in our own lives here below ?

Let us make the offering of ourselves as did Mary at the foot of the Cross, uniting ourselves, as she did, with Him, that our " oblation " may be accepted, not for ourselves alone, but for all poor sinners also.

Destined as we were to be children of Mary, was it not at the foot of the Cross that she said her " *fiat* " to become our Mother ?

"Behold thy son" was meant for us in the person of St John. Here, on Calvary, Mary more fully understood the new maternity which was bestowed on her by her Divine Son from the gibbet of the Cross. Here it was she endured the pangs of her second motherhood. These very pains are the pledge of her future love and care for us. Mary recognises us as her children. She had fully entered into the spirit of her Son in the Redemption, willingly taking her share of the burden.

What a privilege, and acceptable to the Trinity withal, to be permitted to unite our own crosses, light though they may be, with those of Mary which were so united with her Sons, and thus in our own small degree, add our (!) quota to the work of the Redemption!

It will greatly increase our devotion and merit, then, at this moment of the Holy Sacrifice, to arouse ourselves to the fact of *our being beside the Cross*—with Mary and those few friends of our Lord.

How indifferent would seem to be the "faith and devotion" of many today, when at Mass! How like to that of many of the onlookers that surrounded Christ's Rood on Calvary!

Some, turning their back on the Christ, were casting lots for His robe without seam.

> "Let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be" (John xix 24).

Some there were who were idly gaping, uninterested, indifferent:

"And the people stood beholding" (Luke xxiii 35).

So at Mass, some would appear to look listlessly on as though at a commonplace occurrence, an ordinary event, a little diversion; only, perhaps, a more tiresome one than many another.

Even those who might have known better ridiculed Him:

". . . and the rulers derided Him" (*ibid.*).
"And the soldiers also mocked Him,
"coming to Him, and offering to Him *vinegar!*" (Luke xxiii 35, 36).

Others do not come at all, but pass by mocking and taunting:

"And they that passed by blasphemed Him . . ." (Mark xv 29).
"In like manner also the chief priests mocking, said:
"He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Mark xv 31).

But Jesus said:

"*Father, forgive them*, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii 34).

There are surely many, however, who adore Him "in spirit and in truth"; and on whom, as on the small group with Mary, about the Cross, His dying eyes must rest with complacency.

Thus should *we* be present at this same saving Sacrifice. Let us remember that it was by His sacrifice on the Cross that He . . .

" Blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us " (Col. ii 14): and that on the Cross He conquered *in Himself*, and triumphed over the powers of darkness ranged against Him.

What confidence, then, should we not have, when, on our death-bed, we may be—like Him—tempted by the spirit of evil!

We know that in this struggle *in Himself* He not only overcame Satan and his suggestions to despair (John xiv 30; Luke iv 13), but that He *disarmed* him.

Through the Mass it is, in a special way, that we win the privilege and the right to belong to the " party " of Jesus Christ, with Whom we beg, with instancy, yet with humility, to associate us, in His Victory and Triumph, and thus to calm any fears we may have in our last moments, of the devil, of our past sins, and of the Judgment. Amen.

But, to return to our explanation.

Immediately after consecrating the Chalice, the priest places it on the Altar, and, genuflecting, says:

" *Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.*"

That is: " *As often as you do these things,*
" *you shall do them* . . .

First spoken by our Saviour, these words contain a world of yearning and anxiety, that we should continue His Sacrifice, by doing these things—*haec*—in Memory of HIM . . . helping thus to continue the work of Redemption out of sincerest love for Him.

How heartily does the good priest respond to the touching invitation! What an easy and welcome task! Death alone will render impossible this sweet yoke.

Not only does he respond willingly to this dying injunction and request, but most gratefully, till he will himself be unable longer to stand at the Altar of incense.

And, what a subject for eternal gratitude will not this be for him in the life that has no end!

Nor is it only in *memory* of His Divine Master's Sacrifice, with all it meant for mankind, that the good priest is so grateful and desirous to offer the Mass, but, he knows and intends to remind the Eternal Father of the "articles" of the first Agreement, and, as it were, by binding Him anew to them, keep Him to His share in the Compact, as the Divine Son fulfils His.

Moreover, by this means, the priest becomes in a special way the medium whereby the infinite merits of Christ are applied to the souls of men. In this Sacrifice he is *identified* with His Master, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Dispensation, thereby becoming in a peculiar manner "another Christ."

To be mindful of His Master's appeal by the Commemoration of His unspeakable Act of Love and Sacrifice in the Mass, is at once the priest's greatest privilege and boon, and is that which constitutes his priesthood.

The Church, in her gratitude, devotes the next prayer, called the " remembrance " prayer, to the fulfilment of the injunction of her Divine Spouse . . .

" Do this in Remembrance of Me."

CHAPTER V

THE CANON, AFTER THE CONSECRATION

"*Unde et memores . . .*" ("*Wherefore, . . . calling to mind . . .*")

"*Wherefore, O Lord, we Thy servants*—the clergy:
"*as also Thy holy people*, CALLING TO MIND
"*the blessed* PASSION *of the same Christ Thy Son our Lord*—that is the price of our Redemption:
"*His* RESURRECTION *from the dead*—rejoicing for His sake, that He has so gloriously triumphed over death and hell; and for our own, as inspiring trust and confidence in our own resurrection, here and hereafter:
"*and admirable* ASCENSION *into heaven*—His being glorified by the Father and having opened heaven for us:
"*offer unto Thy most excellent Majesty,*
"*of Thy gifts bestowed upon us, . . .*
"*a Pure ✠ Victim, . . . a Holy ✠ Victim, . . . an "Unspotted ✠ Victim, . . .*
"*the Holy ✠ Bread of eternal Life,*
"*and the ✠ Chalice of everlasting salvation.*"

This, the first of the three parts of the prayer after the Consecration, suggested by Christ's own words, should be said with more than usual earnestness and attention by all present.

In it the Church hastens *to show herself mindful* of the dying appeal of her Divine Spouse:

"DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME"

Hence, through her representative and the faithful, after recalling our Lord's chief blessings: His Passion: His Resurrection: and His Ascension: she makes to the Eternal Father a solemn, grateful return—

the official offering
of this PURE, HOLY and SPOTLESS VICTIM,
The Bread of eternal Life,
and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.

The honourable position of this prayer should arouse us to its importance. Christ's Body and Blood have just been consecrated; thereby constituting the Mass: and in our gratitude to the Redeemer, we are, as it were, straitened, till we assure Him of our response to His longing desire to be remembered.

Thus, we not only gladden Him, but show our gratitude to the Father Who sanctioned this "Gift of God" to us.

"He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, . . .
"He hath given Food *to them that fear Him*" (Ps. cx 4, 5).

But, what will not this Food be *to them that love Him!*

Whilst, then, the "sacrificial act" includes to a certain extent the *oblation* of the Gift, this prayer contains the authentic text of the Liturgy, whereby a further *offering* of the Lamb of God to the Eternal Father, by us, is formally made. It is a kind of surrendering to God of the Eucharistic Victim of

Calvary, which is still further symbolically represented by the five signs of the Cross here made by the celebrant, in the very atmosphere of the Crucifixion.

These and other crosses over the "*oblata*" after the Consecration, in no way suggest a *blessing* of what is already infinitely holy; but serve to keep us *in constant remembrance* of Christ's Sacrificial Act on the Cross, whence arises the whole efficacy of our Eucharistic Sacrifice.

From the opening words of the prayer: "*we Thy servants* as also Thy holy people," one is again reminded of the intimacy with which the Church *intends the faithful to enter into the celebration of the Mass.*

We possess now the Bread from heaven of which the Church sings:

"*Panem de coelo praestitisti eis,*
"*Omne delectamentum in se habentem.*"

For, this is, indeed, the true Manna given us from heaven, and contains the "sweetness of every taste."

How fully are here realised the prophetic words:

"Thou didst feed Thy people with the Food of Angels,
"and gavest them Bread from heaven prepared without labour;
"having in It all that is delicious,
"and the sweetness of every taste" (Wis. xvi 20)!

Sed super mel et omnia, Tua *dulcis praesentia !*

The manna in the wilderness, which was the daily nourishment of the Chosen People, was but *a figure of the reality, which is ours !*

" My Flesh is meat indeed," said our Saviour,
" and My Blood is drink indeed " (John vi 56).

In very truth does our Redeemer say to us, You receive Me: I am yours.

Herein is true joy and a feast for the soul. It is Christ's manner of dwelling corporally within us, which is as a prelude to His ever-increasing possession of our souls by His spirit—The Word—and by the other two Persons of the Blessed Trinity. . . . " That My joy," He says, " may be in you, and your joy may be filled " (John xv 11).

But, worthily to partake of this " Manna of the soul," we are to sit at the King's Table clothed with the wedding garment of sanctifying grace, and strive to make ourselves daily more worthy to receive this Gift of God.

Later, it will be indicated how Christ's Resurrection is recalled and portrayed in the Holy Sacrifice. His union with the celebrant and the faithful in Holy Communion may be looked upon as representing His Ascension.

It may not be beside the purpose here to point out that the first few prayers *after* the Consecration are full of echoes of the prayers in the first part of the Canon: that is, of those that are said *before* the Consecration.

The following might be taken as a rough collation of them:

BEFORE the Consecration:

Wherefore, we Thy suppliants (priests),
and Thy whole household (faithful),
O most merciful Father,
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
beseech Thee,
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
to receive and bless,
to consecrate, approve
and make acceptable,
these gifts and offerings,
this holy and unspotted Sacrifice,
to become the Body and Blood of
Thy most Beloved Son.

We offer these gifts to Thee,
for the Church, for our Pope,
our Bishop, and all believers,
and for all here present;
in union with Mary, the Apostles,
and Martyrs,
seeking their intercession.

. . . . . .

Order our days in Thy peace,
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
spare us from eternal damnation,
and count us in the fold
of Thine elect.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

AFTER the Consecration:

Wherefore, we Thy servants (priests),
as also Thy holy people (faithful),
O Lord,
Mindful of Thy Son's injunction,
and of His Passion, Resurrection
and Ascension,
offer to Thy most excellent Majesty,
a Clean Victim, a Holy Victim,
a Spotless Victim, the Holy
Bread of life everlasting and
the Chalice of eternal salvation.
Vouchsafe to receive them
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
as Thou didst the gifts of Abel,
and the sacrifices of Abraham
and Melchisedech.

. . . . . .

We offer them
for those who have gone before us
and sleep the sleep of peace;
for ourselves also, sinners;
in union with Thy Apostles
and Martyrs,
into whose company we beg admission.

Order these offerings to be
borne by Thy holy Angel to Thy
Altar on high, and there offered
in Thy sight, that we who partake
of them, may be filled with every
blessing and grace.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

"*Supra quae propitio . . .*" ("*Upon which, vouchsafe to . . .*")

"*Upon which, vouchsafe to look with a countenance merciful and kind,*
"*and to accept them as Thou wert graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel,*
"*and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham,*
"*and that which Thy High-Priest Melchisedech offered to Thee,*
"*a holy sacrifice and unspotted victim.*"

In the preceding part of this prayer, God's Gift to us—the Lamb of God—was *offered* to the Father.

In this second part, the Church begs, through her minister and those offering with him, that God would deign to *accept* the same offering.

The real sacrificial offering—Oblation—was made in the very act of Consecration: and, as It was an Oblation of the natural Body of Jesus Christ, and consequently of infinite value, It was highly acceptable to the Father.

But, as well as the Chief Victim, the Church has included herself as a victim in the person of her members—Christ's mystical body.

In the prayer, then, she prays rather that God may overlook anything imperfect in her members, and look "*with a countenance merciful and kind*" *on them and on their offering*, by reason of the infinite value of the Oblation of His Adorable Son.

She asks that theirs may be as acceptable as were the offerings of Abel, of Abraham, and of Mel-

chisedech, whom she chooses from the Old Testament as special types of Christ, in His Sacrifice on Calvary.

The three prototypes here mentioned afford striking figures of Christ's Oblation of Himself on Golgotha.

Abel had offered lambs—the "firstlings of his flock" (Gen. iv 4); a figure of the Lamb of God just now immolated; and, as Abel died at the hands of his brother Cain, so Christ died at the hands of His brethren, the Chosen People.

The Church reminds us of *Abraham's* sacrifice to teach us detachment, even from our relatives, if it be necessary to carry out God's will.

How much are we not beholden to the Patriarch for his prompt obedience in a most arduous matter! Do we not now, in part at least, enjoy the Holy Mass as a consequence of his obedience? God seemed to say to him:

"Because thou hast given Me thy only son, I shall give thee Mine!"

St Chrysostom tells us that Abraham's sacrifice was to be an unbloody one, as being a figure of the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Law.

Isaac's patience also is a beautiful symbol of the meekness of our Divine Victim, when being "led to the slaughter."

The sacrifice of *Melchisedech* is also well chosen to represent Christ's Offering of Himself, by reason of the remarkable similarity in some of the external

characteristics of their lives (Heb. vii); as also, by reason of his offering in *bread and wine*.

Moreover, the singleness of purpose and upright spirit of Abel,
the faith and obedience of Abraham, and
the purity of soul of Melchisedech, . . .

are extolled by the Church and proposed for our imitation; for these virtues embody those most dear to the Heart of her Founder.

" *Supplices Te rogamus . . .*" (" *We most humbly beseech . . .*")
" *We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God,*
" *to command that these things—haec—*
" *be borne by the hands of Thy holy Angel*
" *to thine Altar on high, in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty,*
" *that so many of us as at this Altar shall partake of*
" *the most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son*
" *may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.*
" *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

In keeping with the idea contained in this third part of the first prayer after the Consecration, the priest bows down profoundly before the Altar on which the Victim of the Sacrifice rests, whilst his mind soars to the throne of God. . . . By this humble attitude the worshippers are, as it were, notified that this inexpressibly deep prayer is being said, and consequently invited to unite whole-souled with him in its recital.

" . . . *Command that these offerings be borne*
" *by the hands of Thy holy Angel.* "

Various interpretations are given by sacred writers of these words.

The following are, perhaps, the most received:

The " Angel " may be—

The ministering Spirit of the Altar—such as appeared to Zachary; as we read in Luke i 11; or:

It may refer to Christ Himself, Who is called the " Angel of the Great Council " (see also Mal. iii 1); or:

The Holy Ghost may be meant; or it may refer to the . . .

Angel in the Apocalypse; where we read:

> " And another Angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the Saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God " (Apoc. viii 3).

The prayer proceeds:

" *to Thine Altar on high* "—the Bosom of the Eternal Word (see " Introduction," chapter ix, The Altar).

" *In the sight of Thy Divine Majesty,* . . .

" *that so many of us as shall partake of the most Sacred Body and Blood of Thy Son* "—at Holy Communion, the Eucharistic Repast—

" *may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.*
" *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

By whom, or when, this mysterious prayer was introduced into the Mass, does not seem to be known. It is almost too deep for human comprehension. Innocent III says of it: "These words have such a depth of meaning, that the human intellect is scarcely able to penetrate them."

It is as the final effort of the Church; an utterance permissible to the priest as representative of the mystic Spouse of Christ, emboldened by so many favours and marks of His affection.

Having, in the first part of this triple prayer, assured God that we, priest and people, have duly remembered the dying wish of His Son, and, in the second part, reminded Him of the infinite difference that exists between His Son's Sacrifice here continued and the offerings—even of God's greatest friends—in the Old Testament, the priest, in the third part, as spokesman of the Church, bows down in an attitude of the lowest submission, and begs that the Sacrifice just offered may not only be *acceptable* to the Father, but *offered anew* in heaven, on the ineffable Altar of the Bosom of the Eternal Word, there in His own august Presence!

As far as his human limitations will permit, the celebrant in this prayer tries to reconstruct in mind the great Act again renewed, this time before the throne of the Most High.

The Bosom of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is that sublime Altar which may well have been before the priest's mind as he prayed, in the opening Psalm:

"*Introibo ad altare Dei :*" "*I shall go up to the Altar of God, to God Who rejoiceth my youth.*"

Each step of the Liturgy of the Mass has led him nearer and nearer to the awful throne, till he now finds himself at its very foot, making the final offering of the sacramental species which have been borne thither by "Angel hands."

Indeed, might it not even seem at this moment of the Mass that the Infinite Majesty of God deigns to stoop to our lowly Altar, and to fill the sanctuary with Its Presence, surrounded by His resplendent Court? And if God be "in the midst" when but two or three are gathered together in His name, what may we not expect when *so many* are united to worship Him, and with them, His own Divine Son?

His faith and expectancy being aroused, the priest, prostrate at the foot of the throne, very earnestly begs a special favour for those who are about to participate in the Divine Mysteries—namely:

"That he himself, and as many as shall receive the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ at the Mass, may be *filled with every blessing and grace.*"

Obviously the prayer is intended for all those who are about to receive Holy Communion, as the complement of the Sacrifice—that is, *towards the end of Mass*. The petition is, that they may share in the Gift which has just been offered to God and returned to us for the Sacrificial Repast.

To be "*filled with every blessing and grace*" will not be fully realised here, but in the next life. Our

union, however, by Holy Communion is a wondrous grace, being an immediate preparation for eternal union in heaven—the soul's espousals to no one less than to its God!

With our God so near, our hearts would seem to say with the Royal Psalmist:

" Thou hast visited the earth, and hast plentifully watered it;
" Thou hast many ways enriched it . . .
" Thou shalt bless the crown of the year of Thy goodness:
" and Thy fields shall be filled with plenty.
" The beautiful places of the wilderness shall grow fat:
" and the hills shall be girded about with joy.
" The rams of the flock are clothed:
" and the vales shall abound with corn:
" they shall shout; yea, they shall sing a hymn " (Ps. lxiv 10-14).

A brief review of the general purpose of the Liturgy regarding the Holy Sacrifice may here be useful.

In the Offertory, we make over to God our gifts —bread and wine—the best of earth's products as food and drink. These are the sacrificial gifts; but not ultimately so, since they are destined to be sacrificially changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. They are also intended to be a symbol

of ourselves. In the Sacrifice, we do not ask only for the blessing and consecration of the gifts, but also for our own sanctification and *union with God*.

At the Consecration, God, by converting our sacrificial gifts into the Body and Blood of His Divine Son, thus, in His turn, makes over to us His Best Gift! We now feel that our requests will surely be heard. Moreover, His favourable acceptance of our gifts, already infinitely enhanced, connotes His reciprocal desire for union with us.

The love on either side has been intense. The further oblation of our proffered Gifts—explicitly made in the first part of the triple prayer, in which we fulfil Christ's parting wish to be remembered—makes of this Oblation an Act infinitely acceptable to Him.

How inexpressibly gracious is not now the Father's further return of these Gifts to us, when—as we see in the third part of the prayer—He leaves in our possession the "meats of the Sacrifice"!

In doing so, He reassures us of His wish that we may become His honoured guests at the "Lord's Supper," wherein we have the soul's true nourishment, and at which we shall consummate the union so eagerly sought.

This return of the Gifts to us we also regard as a sign of reconciliation and friendship at the loving hands of our indulgent Father.

From our planet—earth—we long to be united with our Maker. This is indeed the ultimate goal of our yearning.

As we make our final oblation at Mass here below, God receives it at the hands of His Angel, on His Altar on high. And so, the live-long day, Christ, the Son of God, is being borne, as on Angel wings, from us to the Eternal Presence. And, not Christ alone is contained in the Gifts we offer, but *ourselves*, our desires, our prayers—designated in the prayer by the words " these things "—as being part of His mystical body. They are offered to the Creator—*through*, *with*, and *in* Jesus Christ—to form one grand whole or unit in God's sight, and upon which He is constrained to cast a complacent regard.

This *oneness* with Christ assures us of a close union with our Creator also, which is, as far as our oblation is concerned, the essential idea and object of sacrifice.

In love, union is perhaps the most fundamental desire. Consequently, though in our sacrificial oblation we primarily praise, honour and thank the Supreme Being for His favours and mercies, there is also a strong, if latent, yearning that we may be *united with* the object of our love.

What a privilege is ours that God so accedes to our request, effecting the accomplishment of this union, in part at least, even on our earthly pilgrimage, as a foretaste and assurance of our final union with Him in bliss eternal!

The " Memento " for the Faithful Departed.

" *Memento etiam, Domine . . .*" (" *Be mindful, O Lord . . .*")

" *Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servants, men and women, N. and N.,*
" *who have gone before us with the sign of faith,*
" *and sleep the sleep of peace.*
" *To these, O Lord, and to all that rest in Christ,*
" *we beseech Thee grant a place of refreshment, light and peace.*
" *Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

In this prayer we beg that those who, through Christ, were united to God while on earth, may have the ineffable blessing of completing their final union with Him in His eternal home. It is a gracious and a loving appeal for those who, if still in need, can no longer help themselves.

" *Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, . . .*
" *who have* gone before *us with the sign of faith,*
" *and sleep the sleep of peace.*"

During this prayer, the celebrant, fixing his eyes on the Sacred host, slowly joins his hands and prays a little while, for those of the Departed whom he wishes specially to recommend to God's keeping. As he again extends his hands, he says:

" *to thee, O Lord, and* to all that rest in Christ,
" *we beseech Thee, grant* a place of refreshment, light and peace."

Joining his hands again, the celebrant bows his head slightly, as if in imitation of our Redeemer, when, " giving up the Ghost," His sacred head bent down to rest on His lifeless breast, as the final,

outward admission of His total surrender to His heavenly Father's will.

As the priest bows down his head, he says:

"*Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen*" . . . as ever, referring all to Christ's loving care.

Before the Consecration, as we have seen, the Church makes a Commemoration for the "living." Now she is mindful of the Faithful Departed in her great Sacrifice of expiation and thanksgiving. She teaches, moreover, that through the Mass we can best help those who are destined for atonement in Purgatory.

The better to understand this prayer for those who have "gone before" us, one has to return in thought to the Early Church, and especially to the days of persecution, when, at Rome and elsewhere, the Mass was not uncommonly said in the Catacombs—the burial-places for their beloved Departed.

The bodies of the deceased—once their "waiting-rooms of clay," and now "Keepsakes for heaven"—were deposited in cemeteries as so many *treasures*.

The word "cemetery" means a "resting-place" or a "place for sleep." Hence, the prayer does not speak of them as "dead"—death is a word unwelcome to human ears—but as having "gone before," as it were a little ahead of us, and whom we shall soon meet again.

They are "gone before" us:

"with the Sign of faith," and they . . .

"rest in the sleep of peace": their bodies to await Gabriel's awakening trumpet at the last roll-call.

One may see a reference to the sleep of Christ Himself in Ps. iii 6: "I have slept and I have taken My rest."

And, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, speaking of the holy deacon Stephen, who, with fortitude and forbearance, had begged forgiveness for those who were stoning him to death:

"And when he had said these words,
"he *fell asleep* in the Lord" (Acts vii 59).

The same idea is met with, in varying words, in all the Catacombs.

How resigned were the faithful in those days to their approaching dissolution! And how expectant to meet again!

To know that their names would be inscribed on the Diptychs, or Tablets, to be read aloud at the Mass, thereby securing the suffrages of the Church, helped in no small degree to temper the natural sorrow of their last parting moments.

How Catholic the custom of joining the hands of our Departed ones, as if in prayer, before consigning the body to the earth whence it came! The Angel of the Resurrection will not fail to recognize them (us) so composed in submission and peace.

In their sleeping-grounds, as in a garden—God's Acre, as it afterwards came to be called—they were planted and labelled, that at the Last Day, the Divine Gardener (John xx 15) might readily recognise the flower that was expected to bud forth and blossom unto fruit eternal.

"For we are seeds—
"Man is but the seed of what he shall be,
"When, in the fulness of his perfecting,
"He drops the husk and cleaves his upward way,
"Through earth's retardings and the clinging clay,
"Into the sunshine of God's perfect day."
(John Oxenham.)

The Divine Husbandman—tireless Reaper of souls—is not likely to show Himself less interested and anxious at the gathering in of the harvest, than He did when He returned to His beloved Garden—the Church—as yet a nursery, after the storm that had devastated it at His death.

The dews of His grace and sunshine of His presence revived the drooping plants with a new sap and vigour. He raised them up and supported them, protected and securely re-established them.

The salvation of His tender plants—the souls of mankind—is for Him an all-consuming occupation, as He assures us by the mouth of the Royal Prophet:

"Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep,
Who keepeth Israel.
"The Lord is thy Keeper:
"The Lord is thy Protection upon thy right hand" (Ps. cxx 4, 5).

In her Office, too, for those who "sleep the sleep of peace," our holy mother, the Church, puts on the lips of her ministers prayers and psalms that speak to her children of comfort and consolation.

" The Lord is merciful and just and our God
showeth mercy.
" The Lord is the Keeper of little ones. . . .
" Turn, O my soul, into thy rest:
" for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee "
(Ps. cxiv 5-7).

She recognises that this life is but a passage towards the next, and a note of joy rather than of affliction runs through her prayers, both for those who are here bereft of their dear ones and for those who, she trusts, are destined to " enter into the joy of their Lord."

Thanks to our holy faith, we are buoyed up in our awaiting death—or better, *the term of our exile*—by the tranquillising assurances of hope.

What trust should not the words of the Apostle Paul arouse in us!

" And we will not have you ignorant, brethren,
" concerning them that are asleep,
" that you be not sorrowful,
" even as others who have no hope " (1 Thess. iv 12).

In early times, we read, the day of death was looked upon as the *natalitia*—that is, the birthday to a new life—of a Saint.

It is on this day, usually, rather than on the day of their birth, that the Church honours her heroic children; for she regards death as an " awakening " into another and better life. For, is not death in reality the germ of birth to a new life, a life of

happiness which awaits us in the vision of God, instinct with glory and loveliness—*in aeternum* ?

One cannot but be impressed in all this, and indeed throughout the Holy Sacrifice, how the Church keeps before our minds her doctrine of the "Communion of Saints"—that is, the union of the Triumphant in heaven, the faithful on earth, and the souls in Purgatory: all forming but one and the same mystical body of Christ.

The following beautiful prayer for their Faithful Departed is found in the Coptic Liturgy (O'Brien, p. 345):

"In like manner, O Lord, remember also all those who have already fallen asleep in the priesthood and amidst the laity; vouchsafe to give rest to their souls in the bosoms of our holy fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: bring them into a place of greenness by the waters of comfort, in the paradise of pleasure where grief and misery and sighing are banished, in the brightness of the Saints."

"*Nobis quoque peccatoribus . . .*" ("*To us sinners also . . .*")

"*To us sinners also, Thy servants,*
"*who confide in the multitude of Thy mercies,*
"*vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship*
"*with Thy holy Apostles and Martyrs*—fifteen are here named:
"*and with all Thy Saints ;*
"*into whose company we beseech Thee to admit us,*

" *not in consideration of our merit,*
" *but of Thy own gratuitous pardon.*
" *Through Christ our Lord.*"

This prayer harks back to the " *Communicantes* " prayer, before the Consecration, and contains the following names of eight men and seven women Martyrs. The dates of their feasts are here added:

John the Baptist	24 June, 29 Aug.
Stephen, Deacon	26 December
Matthias, Apostle in place of Judas ...	24 February
Barnabas, Apostle and companion of St Paul	11 June
Ignatius, Bishop	1 February
Alexander I, Pope	3 May
Marcellinus, Priest, A.D. 304	2 June
Peter, Exorcist, A.D. 304	2 June
Felicitas, A.D. 304	6 March
Perpetua, A.D. 202	6 March
Agatha, Virgin, about A.D. 251	5 February
Lucy, Virgin, about A.D. 304	13 December
Agnes, Virgin, about A.D. 305	21 and 28 Jan.
Cecilia, Virgin, about A.D. 230	22 November
Anastasia, about A.D. 304	25 December.

In the above prayer we beg for our final union with God. Briefly it runs:

" To us sinners also, grant some part with the Saints, and admit us to their number. Through Christ our Lord."

At the opening words of the prayer, " *To us sinners also*," the priest, striking his breast, like the publican in the Temple, raises his voice, thereby breaking, for this once only, the solemn silence of the Canon.

It is, as it were, a sigh or deep groan which he utters in all humility, that escapes the celebrant at the thought of our many miseries and shortcomings.

By some, this raising of his voice is considered to represent the petition of the "good" thief, begging for a remembrance in our dying Saviour's kingdom. He confessed his guilt aloud hoping for forgiveness, and received not only pardon, but a promise of Eternal Bliss.

"This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise" (Luke xxiii 43).

Why should *we* have less hope that our petitions will be as readily granted ?

Others, by this breaking into the silence of the Canon, hear the agonising cry of our Redeemer in the Garden of Gethsemani.

It is remarkable, and seems more than a mere coincidence, that the silence in the Mass proper, that is, the "Mass of the faithful" as it is called, should be broken seven times.

Some see in this a kind of echo of the "Seven Last Words," whereby our Saviour broke the grim silence of His three hours' dereliction on the sacred Rood.

May their echo during the Mass help to bring us nearer to Calvary, and to deepen our appreciation of our priceless Christian Legacy!

The seven occasions are . . .

1. The "*Orate fratres*":
2. The Preface:
3. The "*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*":
4. The "*Pater noster*":
5. The "*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*":
6. The "*Agnus Dei*":
7. The "*Domine non sum dignus.*"

These seven orisons are amongst the most beautiful of the prayers in the "Ordinary" of the Mass, and may be likened to seven pearls clustering around the central . . .

"Pearl of Great Price" . . . the CONSECRATION.

"*Through Christ our Lord*" were the last words used, and the following prayer carries on the idea there contained.

"*Per quem haec omnia . . .*" ("*Through Whom, O Lord . . .*")

"*Through Whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create,*
"✠*sanctify,* ✠*quicken,* ✠*bless and give us all these bountiful gifts.*"

"*All these bountiful gifts:*" that is, "Not the consecrated offerings, but the first fruits of the corn, wine and other offerings that were then to be blessed" (Cabrol, *Liturgical Prayer*, p. 337).

The above is a continuation of the "*Nobis quoque*" prayer, which terminated with the words "*Through Christ our Lord.*"

At the mention of our Lord's name, the Church, through the mouth of her minister, hastens to *credit Christ* for all the gifts and favours we have received through His Incarnation: and not only the gifts themselves, but that He is, as it were, *present in them*, and *working in them* for us, by His creating, hallowing, quickening, and blessing them.

"*Per Ip ✠ sum, et cum Ip ✠ so, et in Ip ✠ so . . .*"
("*Through Him, . . .*")

"*Through ✠* HIM, *and with ✠* HIM, *and in ✠* HIM,
"*is to* THEE, *God, the Father ✠ Almighty,*
"*in the unity of the Holy ✠ Ghost*"

"ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,"

"*For ever and ever*, AMEN."

This closing and crowning prayer of the Canon is very reverential, and, accompanied by the external signs directed by the rubrics, forms what is called the . . .

"LITTLE ELEVATION."

Until about the twelfth century it was the only Elevation in the Mass, when our present Elevation was introduced.

In this prayer, the Church strives with supreme yearning to give her Divine Spouse the greatest possible *praise*, gratefully acknowledging that . . .

All Honour and Glory,
from all creatures—Angelic and human—
redounds to God the Father,
through, and *with*, and *in* Jesus Christ,

The First-Born in the Eternal Mind,
to Whom every created being is subordinate,
and upon Whom they all depend.

To add to its solemnity, the priest, uncovering the Chalice and genuflecting, makes the sign of the Cross with the Consecrated Host, three times over the Precious Blood, and twice again, between the Chalice and his own body, at the mention of the Father and of the Holy Ghost.

And, lastly, whilst holding the Sacred Particle over the Chalice, he raises It together with the Chalice at the words . . .

" *omnis honor et gloria* " (" all honour and glory ") . . . thus completing the " Little Elevation."

This is one of the most solemn moments in the Holy Sacrifice, outside the Consecration. And, since the priest raises the Sacred Species only some few inches above the Altar-table, one should endeavour to be alert, and associate himself with the expressive ceremony heart and soul.

The celebrant is here naturally reminded of the words he makes use of in the " Chapter " of Prime, in the Divine Office:

" Now to the King of Ages,"
" immortal, and invisible, the only God "—*soli Deo*—

"Be honour and glory"—*soli Deo*—for God alone,
"for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. i 17).

Soli Deo! Not only should this be our "watch-word" at Mass—and for the priest in the Divine Office—but, let it have its directing influence on all our actions and aspirations. Write it everywhere! *Soli Deo!* Let it head the page. On your affections and on the powers of your soul; on the walls of your room; over the broad expanse of earth and across the gleaming heavens—the magic words inscribe: *Soli Deo! For* GOD *alone!* (Rev. Vincent Carraffa, S.J.).

At the conclusion of this sublime prayer, the priest, as if beside himself, and in order that the people may join him, breaks through the silence of the Canon by the terminating words:

"*Per omnia saecula saeculorum.*" ("*For ever and ever.*")

To which the attendants respond a fervent . . . "*Amen*" . . . as a warm avowal of their faith and concurrence in all that has been enacted in the sacred Canon.

"By this majestic and overpowering conclusion," says Dr. Gihr, "recited aloud, or sung, the mystic and solemn silence of the Canon is broken, in order that the people, by answering *Amen*, may make known their assent to and approval of all that the priest alone with God praying and offering in the holy

cloud has performed. Thus the Canon terminates in an enthusiastic doxology, which is the gloriously developed crown of blossoms of the ancient, venerable, sacrificial prayer" (*The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*," p. 694).

CHAPTER VI

PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION

"*Pater noster . . .*" ("*Our Father . . .*")

FOLLOWING on the sublime eulogium tendered to God in the last prayer, the priest, raising his voice and thereby finally breaking the mysterious silence of the Canon, makes a final appeal to the Eternal Father. This he does in the words of His Adorable Son, to Him Who is not only our Creator and Lord, but also our "Father."

The Liturgy appropriately places the *Pater noster* after the Consecration and before the Communion or completion of the Sacrifice.

Those who have offered the Sacrificial Gifts by the Consecration and following prayers, are presently to seat themselves at the Banquet of God's love at which He is Himself, as Father of the family, going to be the host.

What thought, then, should be uppermost in the mind of the Church and in our own, if not that of assuring God of our reverence and esteem? This we do by uniting with the celebrant in reciting the Lord's Prayer—the "Family Prayer" of the Church.

Every Christian should be familiar with this incomparable prayer of the Master. It is the model of all prayer.

One may readily believe our Lord had said it from His boyhood, so promptly did it pour from His lips when asked by the Apostles to teach them how to pray (Luke xi 2).

Nay, our Divine Saviour not only *said* the Our Father, but one may say that He *lived it*—that is, based His life on earth, as a man, on the principles it contains.

The *Pater noster* fixes our bearings with regard to God. It is a kind of epitome of our religion and a summary of our Christian life. St Cyprian calls it the "Gospel abridged."

And if at any time we may be said to pray "in the name" of Christ, it is, surely, when we are making use of His own prayer at Mass!

In reciting it, our best attitude is *to pray together, as members of the Church*, rather than as individuals, as the opening words seem to indicate . . . "*Our* Father." . . .

To add to its dignity and solemnity, it is introduced by a kind of preface, or preamble, to arouse our attention in saying it.

This preface begins with the earnest injunction to all:

"*Oremus.*" "*Let us pray. . . .*" It then proceeds:

"*Instructed by Thy saving precepts, and following Thy divine instructions, we are emboldened to say:*

"*Our Father, Who art in heaven*"—the "introduction" to the prayer:

"*hallowed be Thy name*"—first petition:
"*Thy kingdom come*"—second petition:
"*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*"—third petition.

Like the first three commandments, these three petitions relate directly to God.

"*Give us this day our daily bread*"—for soul and body—fourth petition:
"*and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us*"—fifth petition:
"*and lead us not into temptation*"—sixth petition:
"*but deliver us from evil*"—seventh petition:
"*Amen.*" "So may it all be."

These four last petitions refer to ourselves.

In saying the *Pater noster*, the celebrant, in the name of the Church—his eyes fixed on the consecrated Host—calls upon his Lord and Master to represent us in heaven, putting on His sacred lips the requests of His own exalted prayer; and, making use of those lips, he charges Him to intercede for us before the eternal throne, in much the same way as he besought His intercession in the *Gloria*, at the beginning of Mass.

It is important, says St Augustine, frequently to renew our union with Christ praying for us with His voice and heart: praying *for* us as our High priest, and *within* us as our Head; whilst our own prayers are addressed to the Father *through* Him.

As we are saying the prayer of Him Who has come to earth again at our bidding, and is now resting on

the Corporal before us—a further proof that He wishes us to regard Him still as one of ourselves—let us seize the opportunity afforded us, *and constrain Him to say it with and for us*. Not only is He present to our bodily eyes, but, presuming that we are in the state of grace, He is present in the soul—the soul's Divine Guest—and prays in and for us! Hence the efficacy of prayer with the Father.

The same may be said to hold with regard to our returning "love for Love" to God. . . . We know only too well how insignificant is the love we are capable of tendering Him, but are encouraged when we remember that it is supplemented by the Divine Tenant in the soul. When the soul gives without reserve, its love is very acceptable to the Father, and indeed to the Holy Trinity; for, says St John of the Cross, "it is then Love Himself within us Who loves."

Let us unite ourselves, then, in intense desire with Him, trying *to mean all that he meant*, when, on earth, He said each petition of the Our Father. By our thus uniting, out of love for the Father, the warmth of our devotion to the virtue of His appeal in our regard—our poor supplications co-mingling with His of infinite value—our petitions will ascend and be presented before the Father's throne with an altogether new and irresistible potency.

The brief "introduction" to the prayer—"Our Father, Who art in heaven"—is intended to focus

our attention on what we are about to ask for, and should be said thoughtfully.

"*Hallowed be Thy name. . . .*"

He, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, wishes, in this first petition, that His Father's name —that is, the very essence of God as manifested in creation—may be honoured, praised and glorified by all His creatures, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

So we, uniting with Him, strive to intend and wish—infinitely, were it possible—all that He intends, as He thus appeals to the Father in our behalf.

Taking this method as a guide, one may go through each of the petitions, soliciting our Master to be our "Spokesman" in the presence of the Father.

"*Thy kingdom come. . . .*" That is, mayest Thou reign—be regenerated—in our souls.

He, our Divine Representative, speaks again in our stead, wishing for the spread of His Father's kingdom in every soul, *through grace*. We ask that it may "come"; for, though we trust the kingdom of God is already present within us, there are still many who have not yet received it, and we pray that all may be included in our prayer. The fulness of God's reign, however, will not come till the end of time, when the Son of Man will appear in the heavens accompanied by the Angels, to glorify the Father and to justify His sovereignty before all

mankind. Indeed, every prayer and moral act will have a direct bearing on that day.

"*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . . .*"

Again our Divine Speaker petitions for us: we, on our part, joining our yearning with His, that our Father's will alone may prevail on earth, as it does in heaven.

God's interests should be our uppermost thoughts: they ought so to occupy our minds as to crowd out inanities and trifles, matters of no moment *that have no bearing on eternity.*

It is true zeal to hold God's interests above all others, and the surest way to attain our destiny—which is none other than God's glory. And this, in turn, is likewise at once man's greatest gain and glory.

In the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the interests of God are directly embodied. These are, therefore, made the subject of our aspirations as a prelude to receiving Holy Communion. They are the concerns of our most bountiful Benefactor and Parent.

And, as His interests mean, in reality, our own, it is with great attention we should enter into the recitation of this prayer as an immediate preparation for partaking of the Father's bountiful Repast.

"*Give us this day our daily bread. . . .*"

How longingly had not the Bridegroom of our souls yearned for the moment when He might teach us this opening petition of the second part of His Prayer! He knew, as none other, the purpose, and

well-nigh infinite value to us, of the " Bread of Life " which He was leaving us and which He was so eager we should receive as the food of our souls.

That our body should become in Holy Communion a living tabernacle of His sacred Body and Blood is indeed an unprecedented favour. But, how immeasurably greater is the Gift of His Presence in us, *to the soul.* What tongue can appraise, at its true value, the life that It there fosters and maintains ? He would Himself adorn the soul as the innermost altar, or shrine, of the temple of creation, that it might become a suitable abode even for the Holy Trinity!

By the worthy reception of this blessed Gift the soul becomes possessed of a pledge and a guarantee of *union with the Divine Nature*, by which it becomes empowered and qualified *to lead a divine life.* Though to mortal sight this change is not visible—as in the Transubstantiation itself—yet it is none the less *real.*

With renewed earnestness, then, does our Lord, in this petition, beg with us and in our stead, that we, His brethren, may be nourished daily, firstly by this heavenly Manna, and that all our spiritual needs may be satisfied; and also that we may receive from the plenteous hand of His Father's Providence all we require for our temporal necessities.

In a few moments we are about to present ourselves at the sacred Supper to partake of this heaven-sent Bread. May our sincerity in making the petition be an earnest of our longing to receive it!

"*and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us. . . .*"

Our Advocate goes on to ask . . . making Himself one with us, and as though He were Himself still burthened with our weaknesses.

As in the other petitions of this second part, we pray for all, for others as well as for ourselves; for "man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred" (Eccles. ix 1).

"*and lead us not into temptation. . . .*"

That is, strengthen us, in our moments of temptation; and make us victorious; . . . just as He, under temptation, came out Victor. It is natural that we should turn to the Blessed Sacrament for moral strength in our trials. "Whose thoughts," says Fr. Kramp, "do not turn to the Bread of Life, the Table of the Strong at the Table of the Lord when there is mention of the strengthening of our moral powers?"

The attendants offer the Last petition:

"*but deliver us from evil.*"

And especially from the "devil" . . . which was, it is likely, the word used in the original prayer.

In this petition He asks with, and for, us that we might be delivered from everything that opposes our end in life; . . . anything that would prevent our attaining to the first petition—Hallowed be Thy name.

To this last request the priest himself says an earnest "Amen."

In this way the *Pater noster* would be said with meaning and unction, whether it be at Mass or at any other time. Thus we should be making a salutary use of the gracious privilege that is ours of speaking to our Creator, and that, in the Name of Jesus Christ; and we may have every confidence that our prayer will rise, fragrant as incense, to circle round the throne of the Most High.

> "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full" (John xvi 24).

To describe the above method of reciting the Our Father needs many words. But the mind—united with our Master's—can readily intend all here described; and consequently our prayer, in union with His, should prove very fruitful.

In the Eastern Church—in communion with our own—all present join aloud in reciting the *Pater noster*. In one Rite, the people reply "Amen" to each petition (O'Brien, *History of the Mass*).

The prayer which follows is a conclusion, or development, of the last petition of the *Pater noster* . . . "but deliver us from evil."

"*Libera nos quaesumus Domine . . .*" ("*Deliver us, we beseech Thee . . .*")

"*Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord,*
"*from all evils, past, present and to come ;*

" *and, by the intercession of the Blessed and ever glorious*
" *Virgin Mary, Mother of God,*
" *and of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Andrew,*
" *and of all the Saints ;*
" *mercifully grant* PEACE *in our days.* . . .

Here the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the Paten, which he then kisses, as about to serve as a humble " throne," from which Jesus is about to give His *Peace.* The prayer proceeds:

" *that, aided by the help of Thy mercy, we may be always* . . .

" FREE FROM SIN, AND SECURE FROM ALL DISTURBANCE."

(*The* Sacred Host is here broken into three parts:)

" *Through the same Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son,*
" *Who with Thee and the Holy Ghost,*
" *liveth and reigneth God.* . . . Then, raising his voice *:*
" *For ever and ever.* . . . To which the people respond:
" *Amen.*"

Whilst making thrice the sign of the Cross over the Chalice with a small particle of the Sacred Species, the celebrant says:

" *May the* PEACE ✠ *of the Lord be* ✠ *ever with* ✠ *you*" . . . letting fall the sacred particle into the Chalice. The assistants reply:

" *And with thy spirit also.*"

The celebrant then says the prayer:

" *Haec commixtio, et consecratio . . .*" (" *May this mingling . . .*")

" *May this mingling and hallowing of*
" *the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*
" *be to us that receive It effectual unto life everlasting.*
" *Amen.*"

This action, or rite, of breaking the Host and mingling the consecrated Elements is very expressive and full of mystery.

We may see here the Church imitating her Founder in breaking the " Bread " at the Last Supper. Indeed, as we know from St Paul—1 Cor. x 16; and from the Acts ii 42—in the early days of the Church, the Eucharistic Feast was commonly designated by the term the " breaking of the Bread." How comforting is this rite in the Holy Mass when we call to mind that *our* Spiritual Repast is in course of preparation!

Again, the Eucharistic Sacrifice is vividly shown by this breaking of the Bread, inasmuch as It signifies Christ's death on the Cross; the more especially as the breaking is done over the Chalice which contains the Precious Blood.

" He was wounded for our iniquities,
" He was bruised for our sins " (Isa. liii 5).

Moreover, the breaking and mingling of the Sacred Species, says Fr. Kramp, denotes " the unity of the Christian Sacrifice in time and place, the union of the faithful with one another and with Christ as

members of His mystical body, peace as the fruit of this union, and a preparation for Holy Communion." Hence it is important to bear in mind the symbolic ideas of *union and charity* for which the Church here prays.

One may remark here, too, that the material bread and wine which have been changed into Christ's Body and Blood were taken from many grains—of wheat, or of the grape—to form one whole in each species; and now they are further united by the "mingling" of the Body and Blood, to denote the *oneness*, that is, the charity, which exists between the Head and the members, and should exist among the members themselves.

In the Secret for the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Church prays:

"In Thy mercy, O Lord, we beseech Thee, grant to Thy Church the gifts of *unity and peace*, which are mystically signified by the gifts which we offer."

Further, the three signs of the Cross made with the consecrated particle over the Chalice may be taken to represent the three days in which the Body of Christ reposed in the tomb; and to symbolise that the PEACE which He brought came to us through the mystery of the Cross.

The actual uniting of the small Particle of our Lord's Body with the Precious Blood in the Chalice may be looked upon as emblematic of Christ's *Resurrection*, when His Body and Soul were united at the Sepulchre, on the first Easter morn.

How closely we are, here again, brought to the great mysteries of our Blessed Saviour's Life!

As was pointed out above in the prayer "*Supplices Te rogamus*," so here, also, it is clear that the more correct moment for receiving Holy Communion is *after* the Victim has been offered; for the Church here invokes an everlasting blessing on those who are about to partake of the Ineffable Banquet just now prepared.

"*Agnus Dei . . .*" ("*Lamb of God, Who takest . . .*")

"*Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world.*
"HAVE MERCY ON US!"

The Church in this prayer makes use of the words of the Baptist pointing out Jesus Christ to his followers: (John i 29); and how appropriately!

"Behold HIM," she says, "Who taketh away not merely *our* sins, or the sins of any one people, but *the sins of the world!*" And this He did by the shedding of His Blood! . . . of which one drop alone is enough to wash away every stain.

"*Cujus una stilla, salvum facere*
"*totum mundum quit,*
"*ab omni scelere.*"

Not on our door-posts is His Precious Blood sprinkled, as was the blood of the animal slain by the Hebrews for a sign of their deliverance; but It courses through our veins, bringing salvation with It

as a heritage. Our souls are thus marked with the seal of Redemption and consequent deliverance from eternal loss.

> " The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me " (Ps. xv 5).

Let us not fail to recognise the depth of the humility of our Redeemer, Who so willingly undertook to be, as it were, the " scapegoat " for us in the sight of His Heavenly Father:

> " Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by His own Blood, suffered without the gate " (Heb. xiii 12).

And thus it was He took away—not in figure, but in reality—our sins and those of the world; . . . having been driven to ignominious death into the wilderness, by His once Chosen People.

With what yearning St Paul here adds:

> " Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp,
> " *bearing His reproach !*" (*ibid.*, xiii 13).

> " Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows:
> " and we have thought Him as it were a leper,
> " and as one struck by God and afflicted. . . ."
> " All we, like sheep, have gone astray,
> " every one hath turned aside into his own way:"

That is, to do his own will—pinning his love to creatures, and, as it were, *buried in matter*.

" and the Lord hath laid on Him
" the iniquity of us all " (Isa. liii 4, 6). . . .

The detailed vision of this great Prophet, given in this 53rd chapter, might be read here, and pondered with profit.

Our Immaculate Lamb, on whom our iniquities were laid, has carried them away, beyond the ken, as it were, of God Himself.

" Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us,
" And He hath taken the same out of the way,
" fastening it to the Cross " . . . beyond the city walls (Col. ii 14).

" So much," exclaims St Bonaventure, " dost Thou love me, O Lord, that Thou seemest to have nothing but hatred for Thyself."

It may be asked why it is that we, who in the Mass have shown ourselves so earnest that Jesus Christ should come down on our lowly Altar, are so silent and give Him apparently such scant welcome, when He does come amongst us! We welcome any person of note coming into our midst; but to Christ, our heavenly Visitor, we have, so far, not even spoken—at least, directly. How explain such reticence to our All, our true Benefactor and Saviour ?

In coming to us at the Consecration, Jesus came as a *Victim*. . . . But a victim—even our infinite Victim—has no rights as such. A victim remains

helpless, and at our disposal. The victims in the sacrifices of the Old Law were not prayed "to."

And so it is with our Victim, in spite of His ineffable goodness in again renewing the Oblation of Himself; we have, so far, not made any direct petition to Him.

Once, however, that our Lord—by the union of His Body and Blood in the Chalice—is represented on the Altar as *risen*, the Church hastens in the person of her minister to make with great instancy *a direct appeal to Him*, that He would HIMSELF have mercy on us.

In this impassioned entreaty, too, the Church would have her representative bow down over the hallowed Host on the Altar, as though over the Child Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem, and say:

DO THOU, Jesus Christ, our loving Redeemer . . . Lamb of God . . . The Way, and The Truth, and The Life . . . The perfection and fulfilment of the sacrifices of the Old Law: The very "Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix 6). . . .

DO THOU, Who best of all understandest our weaknesses and failings—our utter helplessness—

DO THOU, arisen—Thy glorified Body now before us—

TAKE COMPASSION ON OUR FRAILTY; and, not only *petition* for us, but . . .

DO THOU, THYSELF, FORGIVE US, in Thy mercy!

DO THOU HAVE MERCY ON US!

"*Miserere nobis!*"

The petition is repeated by the celebrant in the name of all.

"*Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,*"
Do THOU have mercy on us!
"*Miserere nobis!*"

Yet a third time do we return in our earnestness:

"*Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,*
"*Do Thou* GIVE *us Peace.*"
"*Dona nobis pacem. . . .*" "GIVE us Peace."

Not merely *ask for* Peace for us, but, Do Thou Thyself *give it to us!*

"Let the mountains receive peace for the people . . ."
"In His days shall justice spring up,
"and abundance of peace" (Ps. lxxi 3, 7).

This is in accordance with His "world-plan" heralded by the Angels over Bethlehem's crib.

With such earnestness as the Church breathes into this entreaty, how could our truest Friend decline our petition? Mindful of our unworthiness —our leprosy—we beg Him . . . as in the *Kyrie eleison* we begged the Holy Trinity . . . to exercise His prerogative of mercy; and grant us to share in the *peace* which He came to bring on earth to "men of good will."

" And I will make a covenant of peace with them, " and I will be their God, and they shall be My people " (Ezech. xxxvii 27).

In Masses for the Faithful Departed, in place of " Have mercy on us " the celebrant says:

" *Dona eis requiem.*" " *Give them rest* "—an invocation which we should make with the same earnestness as in the appeal above for mercy and peace for ourselves.

This request is likewise twice repeated: the third time being:

" *Give them* rest eternal." " *Dona eis* requiem sempiternam."

" *Domine Jesu Christe . . .*" (" *Lord Jesus Christ, Who saidst . . .*")

" *Lord Jesus Christ, Who saidst to Thy Apostles :*
" Peace *I leave you, My* peace *I give you :*
" *look not upon* my *sins, but the faith of Thy Church ;*
" *and grant her that* peace *and unity which is agreeable to Thy will :*
" *Who livest and reignest God for ever and ever. Amen.*"

In this beautiful prayer the Church makes use of those words of Christ in His discourse after the Last Supper: " Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you " (John xiv 27). It comprises the terms of the legacy He left us on that occasion.

Our Divine Master is true to His " world-plan." His first greeting to mankind at Bethlehem had heralded *peace*; it was the embodiment of His best wishes breathed in the Cenacle; and was to be His

first salutation—" Peace be to you "—to the Apostles after His glorious Resurrection. This entreaty for *peace* is more than a mere greeting, it expresses also a benediction, and a supplication for the plenitude of the grace of Redemption.

The prayer itself persists in that quest for *peace* which was asked for with such instance in the "*Agnus Dei.*"

Peace with God:
Peace with ourselves:
Peace with our neighbour.

" Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God " (Heb. xii 14)—the recompense, too, of the " clean of heart."

Moreover, the peace we so much seek and for which we have sighed so many ways in the sacred Rite is meant largely to prepare our souls in Christian concord and unity, before presenting ourselves at the Sacrificial Repast. It would seem a kind of test whereby our Host, and our Master, may know that the guests are worthy to sit at Table.

What a blessed place would even this world be, if this grand aim of the Church in her Liturgy were realised!

Here, at High Mass, the "*Pax*" or " kiss (embrace) of Peace " is given.

In Masses "*de requie*" this prayer for Peace is omitted.

The two following prayers are intended to be an immediate preparation for Communion for the priest

himself. They are said in secret, in a reverent attitude. The second one is of very ancient origin. No comment on them is needed.

"*Domine Jesus Christe . . .*" ("*Lord Jesus Christ . . .*")

"*O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,*
"*Who according to the will of Thy Father didst by Thy death,*
"*through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost,*
"*give life to the world,*
"*deliver me by this Thy most Holy Body and Blood*
"*from all my transgressions and from every evil;*
"*and make me always cleave to Thy Commandments,*
"*and never suffer me to be separated from Thee:*
"*Who livest and reignest*
"*with the same God the Father and the Holy Ghost,*
"*God world without end. Amen.*"

"*Perceptio Corporis . . .*" ("*Let not the receiving . . .*")

"*Let not the receiving of Thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ,*
"*which I, though unworthy, presume to take,*
"*turn against me unto judgment and damnation;*
"*but through Thy loving-kindness*
"*may it avail me for a safeguard and healing remedy*
"*for my soul and body;*
"*Who with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost,*
"*livest and reignest God for ever and ever. Amen.*"

CHAPTER VII

THE COMMUNION AND LAST PRAYERS OF THE SACRIFICE

"*Panem caelestem accipiam . . .*" ("*I will receive the Bread . . .*")

"*I will receive the Bread of heaven, and*
"*call upon the name of the Lord.*"

HAVING in the two previous prayers tried to prepare his soul to receive his Lord and Master worthily, the celebrant now proceeds to communicate himself, placing all reliance on God.

"*I will receive*," indeed, he says, "*the Bread of heaven . . .*" the Bread of Angels . . . which can best satisfy our longings on earth, and which gives a foretaste of the peace of heaven . . . "*and call upon the name of the Lord.*"

Before, however, receiving the Sacred Body of Christ, striking his breast he thrice proclaims aloud his unworthiness—saying in those words of the Centurion, which . . .

"When Jesus heard, He marvelled, not having found such great faith, even in Israel" (Matt. viii 10):
"*Domine, non sum dignus . . .*"

" *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my (!) roof,*
" *say but the word and my soul shall be healed.*"

Then, taking the most Sacred Body of Christ into his hands, and making with It the sign of the Cross upon himself, whilst saying:

" *May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ*
" *stand guard over my soul unto life everlasting. Amen*" . . . he welcomes his Friend with boundless confidence, and becomes a living tabernacle for Christ made man.

His desires now accomplished, the priest unites himself, heart to heart, with his God; and during the brief time required to take up any particles that may be on the Corporal, he is absorbed in meditation and interior intercourse with God, conversing as friend with Friend, as representative with his Director.

But, these precious moments must be of short duration; for the Mass is essentially an Action, something *to be done* and not merely to be recited or meditated.

" Therefore, as if reluctantly, he comes out of that ecstasy of admiration and love. He lifts up that head which reposed so lovingly on the breast of Jesus in this other cenacle. He opens his eyes as if surprised to find himself still on earth; and his heart, like an over-flowing fountain, pours forth a stream of gratitude. In the burning accents of the Prophet he exclaims:

"What shall I render to the Lord for all He has rendered to me?" (Lecourtier, quoted by Fr. Chaignon, p. 261).

Having received the Bread of Life, the celebrant's first thought, then, is one of gratitude. Like Tobias, he wonders what return he can make for this priceless Gift! (Tob. xii 1; Ps. cxv 12).

"*Quid retribuam Domino . . .*" ("*What return . . .*")

"*What return shall I make the Lord,*" he says,
"*for all He has given me?*"

What better return of gratitude and confidence can he show, he thinks, for this favour, than, by stretching out his hands, ask for still further graces and blessings? Hence, he adds:

"*I will take the Chalice of salvation*
"*and call upon the name of the Lord.*
"*Praising, I will call upon the Lord,*
"*and I shall be safe from my enemies.*"

The tenor, or purport, of this "*Quid retribuam*" prayer might well form the warp in the woof of our lives. By our good lives, and not by mere words, should we prove ourselves grateful for God's gifts and graces.

Then, with the liveliest sentiments of faith, of confidence and of love, taking the Chalice with its Precious Contents, and signing himself with It, he drinks in the refreshing draught of those Waters of Eternal Life whence "spring virgins"—saying:

" *May the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*
" stand guard *over my soul unto Life Everlasting. Amen!*"

" The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup;
" it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me " (Ps. xv 5).
" . . . and my chalice which inebriateth me,
" *how goodly is It !*" (Ps. xxii 5).

" Jesus answered and said:
" If thou didst know *The Gift of God*,
" and Who He is that saith to thee—' Give Me to drink,'
" thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him and
" He would have given thee Living Water " (John iv 10).

" He that shall drink of the Water that I will give him,
" shall not thirst for ever:
" But the Water that I will give him,
" shall become in him a fountain of water,
" springing up into Life Everlasting " (John iv 13, 14).
" He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood,
" *hath* Everlasting Life:
" and I will raise him up in the last day " (John vi 55).

With the communion of the priest, which is an integral part of the Mass-rite, the Sacrifice is consummated.

Christ is united through the priest with the Church: and thus it becomes sanctified.

What follows now is mostly by way of thanksgiving.

During the time of the priest's communion, let *us* be occupied with our own preparation for Holy Communion.

The Liturgy takes it as a matter of course that those who have offered the Mass with the priest will also, like him, partake of its "fruits"—the *Sacrificial Repast.*

Just before approaching the holy Table, we ought to say the "*Confiteor*" with the acolytes, striking our breast with contrition and lasting compunction for our many sins, and calling upon our Lady and the Saints to intercede for us.

Attend as the celebrant, turned towards us, says the following prayer:

"*May the Almighty God be merciful to you,*
"*and forgiving you your sins,*
"*bring you to life everlasting!*" To which reply,
"*Amen.*"

And whilst he pronounces over us the "General Absolution," let us listen with reverent expectancy, signing ourselves with the sacred sign of salvation.

"*May the Almighty and merciful Lord*
"*grant you pardon, absolutiom, and remission of your sins!*"

To this, again, we shall answer with earnestness, "*Amen,*" trying to be quite absorbed and actuated

by sentiments similar to those of the Apostles in the Supper Room, when we behold Jesus Christ raised up to our gaze as the priest says:

"ECCE AGNUS DEI."

"*Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world.*"

With intense attention, then, let us say with the priest, whilst striking our breast three times:

"*Lord, I am not worthy that* THOU *shouldst enter under* my (!) *roof;*
"*say but the word and my soul shall be healed.*"

Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come to my earthly dwelling: my house of clay. Why should the King visit *my* squalid hovel?

But, Thou canst make it clean. Come! Purify my soul.

Say but one word and my soul shall be cleansed.

In some such sentiments as these, approach the Eucharistic Banquet—The Lord's Supper. Herein we eat the Bread of Angels and drink at the Fountain Source of Living Waters.

Give ear to the words of the priest, whose privilege it is to serve at the Table:

"*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi,*
"*custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*"

"*May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ*
"stand guard *over your soul unto Life Everlasting.*
Amen."

Others, indeed, we may trust to keep and protect whatever goods or treasures we may possess; but *to Jesus Christ alone* do we commit that which is priceless in value—utterly beyond all else we have—*our immortal soul!*

In His safe keeping we have no cause for fear; for none is stronger than He. Till now He has kept faithful guard over my soul, yet a few years and I shall be safe for ever.

"The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy protection . . .
"The Lord keepeth thee from all evil:
"May the Lord guard thy soul" (Ps. cxx 5, 7).
"O taste and see that the Lord is sweet;
"Blessed is the man that hopeth in Him" (Ps. xxxiii 9).

What a consummation, greatly to be desired, could we but return to the fervour of the Early Christians, and *all go daily* to gladden the Sacred Heart, by receiving from Him this "Gift of God," so lovingly lavished upon us! How sincere our appreciation of His boundless love, *and how warm our remembrance of Him*, were we to see to it that our "breakfast" be, first, that of the soul!

"Holy Communion is not a luxury for special occasions; nor reward for exceptional virtue. It is the ordinary daily food to maintain and increase vigour in our spiritual life, to resist sin, to advance in virtue" (Fr. Lattey, S.J., *Thy Love and Thy Grace*, p. 193).

On this subject we have the following wish expressed by the Council of Trent:

"The holy Synod desires that at each Mass the faithful present should communicate, not alone spiritually, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist, that the fruits of this Holy Sacrifice may reach them in greater abundance" (Sess. xxii, c. 6).

And again: In his decree on the practice of daily Communion, Pope Pius X warns us not to suppose that the Eucharist was intended to be a reward for virtue already attained, but that it is directed mainly to this end that "the faithful being united to God by means of this Sacrament may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, and to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable."

Holy Communion, or as St Paul calls it, the "Lord's Supper," is a return Banquet given by God to us His subjects and chosen guests, for the honour and homage we have paid Him by the whole sacrificial Action.

There is a divinely appointed connection between the Eucharist as a Sacrifice and as a Sacrament; and as far as may be, it should be our endeavour to maintain it. It is the wish of the Church that all should take part in the latter, which is the completion of the Sacrifice itself.

To be satisfied with a "spiritual Communion" is what the Catechism of the Council of Trent calls

" cheating oneself of the greatest of heaven's goods." Spiritual Communion is merely a substitute for Sacramental Communion at Mass. In the former the symbolic union with God, intended by the Mass and subsequent partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, are wanting. . . . It is to a real Repast that God in His goodness invites us, not to an imaginary one, or one of symbol only.

That we may be more and more fit to approach our Father's Table, let us try to live in an atmosphere of readiness for this constant visit of our Friend, and make, as far as possible, of our daily work and life one unbroken preparation for this Sacramental union, as well as a constant thank-offering—Eucharist—for His so oft-repeated coming.

It is our own fault, alas! that we do not by thought and reflection on the many beautiful things of God's creation—the " screen of His effects "—drink in *The Truth* more readily and with increasing hunger, and thus in a sense " communicate " with His infinite perfections.

That our Master has deigned to provide for us so gracious a means of communicating with the Blessed Trinity—in very deed—is one of the highest expressions of God's good-will and love for us.

We should then long to say with David:

" I set the Lord always in my sight:
" for He is at my right hand that I be not moved " (Ps. xv 8).
" My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation:

" I will sing to the Lord, Who giveth me good things:
" yea, I will sing to the name of the Lord the Most High " (Ps. xii 6).
" Thou hast made known to me the ways of life:
" Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance:
" at Thy right hand are delights even to the end " (Ps. xv 11).

" For," says the Author of the *Imitation of Christ*,
" This most high and most excellent Sacrament is . . .
" The health of soul and body,
" the remedy of all spiritual diseases, by which
" my vices are cured,
" my passions are restrained,
" temptations are overcome or lessened,
" a greater grace is infused,
" virtue receives an increase,
" Faith is confirmed,
" Hope strengthened,
" Charity inflamed and extended " (Book iv 4).

By means of the Blessed Sacrament of our Altars, God has abundantly fulfilled His promise of Old to . . .

" Furnish a table in the wilderness " . . . (Ps. lxxvii 19):
" I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven " (John vi 51).
" He struck the rock "—Christ—" in the wilder-

ness: and gave them to drink, as out of the great deep; . . . streams ran down as rivers; . . . and the waters gushed out, and the streams *overflowed*" (Ps. lxxvii 15, 20).

"He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood
"*hath* Everlasting Life:
"and I will raise him up on the last day" (John vi 55).

Holy Communion to us poor mortals, in this "Vale of tears," is a priceless boon beyond human language to describe. Nor can we, here, realise fully all that It means to us.

In our helplessness we simply, but unhesitatingly, *believe*.

Nay! The knowledge and admission of our limitations is in a sense part of our ground of hope. Such light is given only to the humble. At this Blessed Banquet all are on the same level: King and peasant, rich and poor. Neither title, nor rank, is recognised. All receive alike. The priest passes no one by, though he may know of his unworthiness.

Moreover, our fleeting union with our Immanuel is as a prelude to our everlasting union with Him in eternity.

"We approach the Altar as the Table of our Heavenly Father. There, earthly distinctions of nationality, of race, of class, no longer exist. We kneel before it as brothers, children of our mother, the Catholic Church, whom she has brought forth for God" (*Catholic Doctrine of Grace*, Fr. G. H. Joyce, S.J.).

" *Quod ore sumpsimus, Domine . . .*" (" *Grant, O Lord . . .*")

About to consume the first ablution, or purification of the Chalice, the priest, speaking for the congregation as well as for himself, says:

" *Grant, O Lord, that what we have taken with our mouth,*
" *we may receive with a pure mind ;*
" *and that from a temporal gift,*
" *It may become for us an everlasting remedy.*"

Let us strive to be specially recollected after Holy Communion, beginning our *Act of thanksgiving* with the priest, in gratitude for such a bounteous gift.

It seems not uncommon now for people to leave the Church *immediately* after Mass, overlooking—like nine out of the ten lepers—to " return and give glory to God " for the miraculous favour which was but now granted them! (Luke xvii 12).

Let us, rather, imitate the one who . . .

" when he saw that he was made clean,
" went back,
" with a loud voice glorifying God " (*ibid.*, 15).

Whilst preparing to receive the second ablution, the celebrant prays thus:

" *May Thy Body, O Lord, which I have received,*
" *and Thy Blood, which I have drunk,*
" *cleave unto my inmost soul ;*
" *and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me*

" *whom Thy pure and holy Sacraments have refreshed :*
" *Who livest and reignest for ever and ever. Amen.*"

Like the two prayers recited immediately before Communion, the priest says the above prayer for himself. But we should all, likewise, say it, each for himself, from the Missal.

Possessing now the Lord within our breast, we ask that He would deign to *remain* within us—" *cleave unto our inmost soul* "—take up His permanent *abode* in us, and that we may abide in His love. . . .

Jesus said to His disciples:

" If any one love Me, he will keep My word,
" and My Father will love him,
" and We will come to him,
" *and We will make our abode with him* " (John xiv 23).

And thus it will be that our Communion with Him at the Altar rail will be a further establishing within us of *that Sweet Communion* which He deigned to hold, when He clothed Himself with our flesh and blood at the Incarnation.

It will also be as a warrant for the final ineffable Communion with Him and with the Holy Trinity, for which we yearn—in bliss eternal.

The " Communion "

After cleansing and covering the Chalice, the celebrant returns to the Missal and reads the " Com-

munion antiphon "—a short but very impressive prayer.

Originally, it consisted of a whole psalm chanted by the choir. Now, however, it is usually made up of a short passage of Scripture, or of a prayer by the Church. As we have seen in the case of the Introit and the Offertory, it is appropriate to the occasion. Like these, it will be found in your Missal at the Mass for the day.

Moving towards the centre of the Altar, the priest reverently kisses it out of respect for our Lord Whom it represents.

He then turns to the faithful with the customary salutation:

"*Dominus vobiscum.*" ("*May the Lord be with you.*")

This greeting, after the Communion, seems to gather even more meaning and unction than usual, now that those present possess our Lord's Body corporally, or at least spiritually.

To the salutation the assistants also might answer with an increase of fervour:

"And with the 'spirit of thy anointing,' O priest of the Most High!"

The "Postcommunion"

Again returning to the Missal, the last prayer—Postcommunion—is read.

This prayer, like the Collect, and the Secret, varies with each Mass; and commonly turns on the idea of *thanksgiving*.

Should there be several Postcommunion prayers, they will be indicated in the Missal. Their number is the same as for the Collects and the Secrets.

It is worthy of remark that, since this is an official and public prayer of the Church, it implicitly assumes that all present have received Holy Communion.

Moreover, it is clear that it refers not only to the priest and the immediate assistants, but also to the faithful who have just been so closely united in the consuming as well as in the offering of the Sacrificial Supper.

The reciprocal salutation is again made:

"*May the Lord be with you.*"

To this, again, the people respond: "*And with thy spirit*" . . . with something of the earnestness of St Paul's greeting to his beloved Timothy: "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit" (2 Tim. iv 22).

Still turned towards the congregation, the celebrant says:

"*Ite Missa est.*" ("*Go, it is the dismissal.*")

To this should come from all hearts the grateful response:

"Deo Gratias." ("Thanks be to God.")

This "dismissal"—"*Ite Missa est*"—by the celebrant would seem to contain in one idea . . .

"Go-in-peace-with-hearts-full-of-gratitude:
"The-Sacrifice-is-consummated."

The response by the people should be none the less earnest and comprehensive. Their "*Deo gratias*" should be attentive and heartfelt.

Whenever the "*Gloria*" has not been said at Mass, in place of "*Ite Missa est*" the priest says:

"*Benedicamus Domino.*" ("*Let us bless the Lord.*")

To which is made the same reply as above: *Deo gratias.*

In Masses for the Faithful Departed, he says:

"*Requiescant in pace.*" ("*May they rest in peace.*")

A fervent "*Amen*" will be our appealing reply.

These two last petitions, "*Benedicamus Domino*" and "*Requiescant in pace*"—unlike the "*Ite Missa est*"—are said by the celebrant whilst he is *turned towards the Altar.* They are, really, prayers; and, like all the Mass prayers, are said by him *facing* the Altar.

Having announced the "dismissal," the priest, turning once more to the Altar, in an attitude of reverence, recites the prayer:

"*Placeat Tibi, Sancta Trinitas . . .*" ("*May this offering . . .*")

"*May this offering of my homage be pleasing*
"*to thee, O Holy Trinity;*
"*and grant that the Sacrifice which I, though unworthy,*

" *have offered up in the sight of Thy Majesty,*
" *may be acceptable to Thee,*
" *and through Thy mercy be a propitiation for me,*
" *and for all those for whom I have offered it.*
" *Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*"

This prayer is very beautiful, both in its form and in its petition; and is fittingly made to the Triune God, to Whom—alone—the Holy Sacrifice has been offered.

For the priest himself it is as a prayer of propitiation before the invoking the blessing of the same Holy Trinity, and might be said to correspond to the prayer, " *Sacrosanctae et individuae Trinitati,*" at the conclusion of the Divine Office.

The " Blessing "

Pressing his lips to the Altar, as if to draw the grace to bless from the Source of all grace, and, raising his hands as a suppliant to heaven, facing the Altar, the celebrant says in a clear tone:

" *Benedicat vos omnipotens* Deus,"

. . . and turning to the congregation, he continues, whilst making the sign of the Cross . . .

" Pater, *et* Filius, *et* Spiritus Sanctus."

That is: " *May the Almighty God,* Father, Son, *and* Holy Ghost, *bless you !*"

An earnest " *Amen* " should be the reply of all.

This beautiful rite at the close of the Mass readily

recalls the final blessing of our Divine Master to His faithful followers at the Ascension on Mount Olivet (Luke xxiv 51).

Now, moving to the Epistle side of the Altar, he makes the usual salutation:

"*Dominus vobiscum.*" ("*May the Lord be with you.*")

The reply comes again *from all:* "*and with thy spirit.*"

The "Last Gospel"—usually from St John—is then announced with the three signs of the Cross, as at the first Gospel.

"*In principio erat* VERBUM . . ." ("*In the beginning was the* WORD . . .")

"*In the beginning was* THE WORD,
"*and* THE WORD *was with God,*
"*and* THE WORD WAS *God.*
"*The same was in the beginning with God.*

"*All things were made by* HIM,
"*and without* HIM *was made nothing that was made.*

"*In* HIM *was Life, and the Life was the Light of men:*
"*and the Light shineth in darkness*
"*and the darkness did not comprehend It.*

"*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*

" *This man came for a witness to give testimony of*
The Light,
" *that all men might believe through Him.*
" *He was not The Light,*
" *but was to give testimony of The Light.*
" *That was the True Light*
" *which enlighteneth every man that cometh*
into this world.
" *He was in the world,*
" *and the world was made by Him,*
" *and the world* knew HIM not.

" *He came unto His own,*
" *and His own* received HIM not.
" *But as many as received* HIM,
" *to them He gave power to be made*
" *the* SONS OF GOD:
" *to them that believe in His name ;*

" *who are born,*
" *not of blood,*
" *nor of the will of the flesh,*
" *nor of the will of man,*
" *but, of* GOD. . . .

" *And* THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH,
" *and dwelt amongst us :*

" *and we saw His glory . . .*
" *as it were the glory*
" *of the* ONLY-BEGOTTEN *of the* FATHER,
" *full of grace and truth.*"

At the conclusion of this ravishing review of the

" WORD of God," let us reply, with full hearts and grateful:

" DEO GRATIAS." (" THANKS BE TO GOD.")

The following extract from the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for May, 1923, by Fr. F. Clarke, will help to raise our appreciation of these opening words of St John's Gospel:

" . . . As faith ponders over these sacred sentences, we seem to be soaring on Angel wings beyond the confines of space, above the limits of time, into heaven and eternity. Breathless we stand before the innermost temple of Divinity, and, as the veil is partially raised, our awestruck vision is dazzled by the glimpse of the infinite majesty and unfathomable nature of the God-head. We are privileged with a glance of the WORD of God in all the glory of His eternal Sonship, abiding in close and loving communion with the Heavenly Father. . . ."

With a good will and a little effort, one can make of the Last Gospel a short, but fruitful, act of thanksgiving after Communion.

In my Missal I read:

" *In* HIM *was Life* " . . . and, now that He is *within me*, that Life is my life. It is as the very soul of my life. Nay, it is Life Eternal! And this Life I wish to make the Light of *my* life.

" *and the darkness did not comprehend It.*" Is it true that I have not comprehended ? Have I not yet reflected on the . . .

"Depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God"?—That is, Jesus Christ (Rom. xi 33).

He is the true Light that enlightens all by His wisdom and knowledge.

"*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and*
"*the world* knew Him not."

Have I known Him Who has deigned to come to my house, as to that of another Zaccheus? Or am I as heedless as the outside world which has not known Him?

In His infinite condescension He has come to *me* whom He calls "His own" . . . as He came to the Chosen People. But, has it been with me as it was with them? Has He had to complain of me as He did of them?

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib:
"but Israel hath not known Me,
"and My people have not understood" (Isa. i 3).

And, "*His own received Him not.*"

Received Him, yet received Him not!

Have I received Him merely sacramentally, and not with any real sign of love or welcome? Full of other thoughts? So that, being so listless, I may be said to have "*received Him not.*"

"*But*"—and this is comforting—"*to as many as received Him, to them He gave the grace to be made the* sons of God."

Give ear to the Royal Prophet:

" I have said: You are gods . . .
" and all of you the sons of the Most High " (Ps. lxxxi 6).

And again to St. Paul:

" For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit,
" that we are the sons of God.
" And if sons, heirs also . . . and joint heirs with Christ " (Rom. viii 16, 17).

" *and* . . . *The* WORD WAS MADE FLESH . . ." and, as I genuflect . . .

HE DWELLS WITHIN *me !* . . . and this, not only in the more general sense, but I *possess* Him wholly.

In some such manner as this one may profitably spend the time of the recitation of the Last Gospel, in thanksgiving.

After Communion, let us remain for some time making our thanks-offering—alone with our best Friend, assuring Him of our appreciation of His whole-souled goodness towards us.

Then, indeed, we shall return home, like the Early Christians, filled with sentiments of gratitude, love and sacrifice; deeply impressed with all we have witnessed and participated in.

We should be buoyed up for the trials and crosses of the day and have the strength to go forward,

persevering with vigorous and elastic step, to our real home in eternity.

" Pressing towards the mark," as St Paul tells us,
" to the prize of the supernal vocation of God
" in Christ Jesus " (Phil. iii 14).

Our life will then be spent in peace; and will not be such a burden to us in our pilgrimage here below.

Our palm tree will be well set, and take strong root beside the running waters; it will never wither, nor will its leaves fall off.

The soul will be rooted in Jesus Christ, from Whom flow the streams of eternal Benediction, essential for our supernatural life.

" I am the vine," He tells us, " you the branches:
" He that abideth in Me and I in him,
" the same beareth *much fruit* " (John xv 5).

And, where should there be found a better means of remaining, of *abiding*, in the Vine . . . than by the daily and intimate communion with HIM in the . . .

HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS ?

CHAPTER VIII

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

" Bless the Lord, O my soul
" and let all that is within me
" bless His holy name."

(*Psalm* cii 1.)

As far as possible, then, all who have offered to God the Eucharistic Sacrament—the sacrificial Sacrament—should endeavour to complete the good work by taking part in the sacrificial repast. To so partake of the " fruits " of the Sacrifice is to make a solemn profession of faith.

The refusal of guests invited by a king to a tourney or to the chase might be easily interpreted as insulting, should they not remain for the banquet to follow—the very climax of the function.

The mere invitation to such an event occupies the minds of the invited folk long before the event takes place. This is a tacit manifestation of the honour shown them.

Why then should the faithful refuse to sit at the Table of Him Who is the Host of hosts ?

What becomes of our sense and powers of discernment when we seem so listless and cold to the bidding of God Himself to sit as His guests at the Divine Table ?

Why should we be so occupied with honours of

earth and deaf to the Voice of our Heavenly Entertainer ?

Herein, we have a perpetual reminder, not in parable but in actual life, of the empty seats at the banquet of the Parable of the Gospel (Luke xiv 16-24).

And, even if it were possible for men to refuse with such lame excuses to attend such a function of an earthly lord, how is it possible to decline to present oneself at the Heavenly Banquet wherein God is Himself the Host, and at which the Food of Angels is provided as the nourishment of our souls! Should we not rather be filled with appreciation and gratitude ?

It is at this Sacred Banquet that we receive the Food and the Drink whose nature it is to sustain and increase sanctifying grace—supernatural life—within us.

Christ is Himself at once the soul's Manna and refreshing Fountain in this our earthly wilderness.

" I am the Bread of Life . . ." (John vi 35).
" If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever " (John vi 52).
" He that shall drink of the Water that I shall give him
" shall not thirst for ever " (John iv 13).

At this spring we draw the " Waters of Eternal Life."

This is the life of the interior. It means *sanctifying grace*, a priceless gift which God Himself always accompanies. He is not separate from His gift. He abides in us, and we in Him, and are His children

and heirs. "As many as received Him, He gave them power *to be the sons of God*" (John i 12).

The Blessed Eucharist is called the "Sacrament of the Altar." It is essentially so; its very nature is expressed in the title. This it is that differentiates It, as it were, from the other Sacraments. In the latter we have the channels of grace; this Sacrament contains its source.

Holy Communion is not a devotion detached from the Mass, but forms an integral part of it. The Liturgy supposes that those who assist in offering the Sacrifice will likewise partake of the sacrificial repast.

Nor is Holy Communion a devotion for oneself alone: we are not mere units divided from our neighbour; not independent entities but members of the one mystical body of Christ. We should receive this Gift of heaven *in union with and for the welfare of others*, that all may become more united with Christ and the Church, and for the universal uplifting of humanity, restoring it to its lost position in the idea of God.

Our thoughts and ideas should be expanded to world-wide ambitions, not satisfied with the petty things of life, nor narrowed down to self, to selfish devotion or sentimentality. Since Holy Communion forms an integral part of the Mass, it is by no means restricted to the individual; and, being all of the "family of God," our union in charity should be nothing short of God-like.

That our brethren are likewise invited tells us that God assumes that we are, or will become, friends to one another. Charity therefore . . . " the greatest of these " . . . should reign among all. Why should it be otherwise with those who are:

> " persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers " (Acts ii 42)?

The Council of Trent—Sess. xiii—speaks of the Blessed Eucharist as the " sign of unity, the bond of love and the figure of union."

In the Early Church, was it not in reality the communication with one another, and especially in the " breaking of bread," that gave rise to the beautiful utterance on the part of the outside world . . . " See how these Christians love one another "?

Though the soul in the state of grace is united with Christ, still it is always capable of greater union indefinitely; and with this increased union there arises an increase of longing for Him.

The ineffable love which God has for a soul in the state of grace, as well as the supernatural loveliness with which He invests it, are of a depth and beauty greater and more sublime than any of earth.

Moreover, with this grace and supernatural beauty which He confers in this Sacrament of union, He bestows upon the soul the gift of supernatural love wherein it becomes intimately united in a real but mysterious manner with Him. The " plain gold ring " which typifies the sacred, indissoluble

character of the tie between husband and wife is but a figure of His union with the soul in Communion. It is a union far closer, truer and more intimate than any in created nature; it is even above the comprehension of any created reason. God immerses the soul in an ocean of His Divine light, inundates it with a flood of peace and joy, and takes it to His ineffable embrace so close that all created things are powerless to separate it from Him.

For, as well as being our Father and Friend, He becomes the Spouse of the soul. The barriers that for so long stood in the way to such union He has swept away by the torrent of His Love. And, in her turn, the soul, as His spouse, claims Him unimpeded and possesses Him as a right. With the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles she can exclaim:

> " My Beloved to me, and I to Him, Who feedeth among the lilies " (Cant. ii 16).

" This love which God bestows on the soul can only be compared to that which He bears His own Son by making us participate in the Divine Nature, and we again approach and return to our heavenly Father by filial love, as we have proceeded from Him, and the same Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and the Son becomes the bond and seal of our union with God " (P. Nieremberg, S.J.).

The daily Mass, then, and the accompanying Communion, are the best means of strengthening this bond between the Lover and the beloved. For such a soul there is nothing but Christ in life, and to give all becomes its all-absorbing aim.

Some Thoughts, or Methods, for Thanksgiving after Communion

Does it not seem too much for human credence that at the Holy Table we partake of, and consume, the Sacrificial Gifts that have been borne by God's "Angel" before Him, accepted by Him, and returned to us as Food for our souls?

At Holy Communion we present ourselves at this Table with our King, as specially honoured and most welcome guests, sharing in the Eucharistic Repast, which is a tangible, physical, visible token of love on the part of God, and of thanksgiving on our own.

Whilst going to the Altar rails, one should try to be very recollected, shutting out every alien thought.

After His visit to us, returning to our place in the Church, we might with profit recall these words of David:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul:
"and let *all that is within me* bless His holy name" (Ps. ciii 1).

The attentive soul will here go with great yearning and bless the Eternal Father for this favour: The Gift of God—His own Adorable Son.

"And let all that is within me;" . . . Thou art, Thyself, within me; as surely as in Mary's bosom at the Incarnation!

Do Thou bless Him in my stead: Be my Spokesman before *our* Father, and bless Him—for me.

Tell Him of this grace which is mine; and beg of Him to care for me through life. I am now His son and heir.

> " Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, *and should be* the sons of God " (1 John iii 1).

And, as well as blessing the Father, bless the Holy Ghost also—for me.

And Thou, O Eternal Father, bless God the Son and the Holy Ghost—for me.

And do Thou, O Holy Spirit, pour out Thy blessing on the Father and the Son—for me.

I have tried through life to make my body a temple for the Holy Spirit; and now it is, through Thy love, a living temple—as Mary's was—of the Body of Thy beloved Son.

> " Be still and see that I am God " (Ps. xlv 11).
> " Let all flesh be silent at the presence of the Lord:
> " for He is risen up out of His holy habitation " (Zach. ii 13).

Henceforward, I shall myself endeavour to remain Thy " habitation "—a living tabernacle, whence Thou shalt no more depart. I shall thus attain to union with Thee and with the Holy Trinity, the final Object of our yearnings.

For the short time that we usually devote to acts of gratitude after Communion, it would be best, were we able, to utter the thoughts that arise in us through the Holy Spirit, and tell Him of our welcome.

Consequently, no prescribed method of thanks-offering would be required.

Not all, however, have the power of so concentrating their thoughts, or are so gifted, as to be able to remain, even for a quarter of an hour, peacefully absorbed in contemplation of God's condescension, and of Christ's Personal Love for them.

Owing to our weakness, then, some method seems almost a necessity.

That manner of returning thanks should be used which brings greatest profit to the individual soul. Sometimes, however, a change of method will be of advantage.

A quickening of our *faith* is really what is most needed—a *realisation* of the *fact* that Jesus Christ has deigned to make us His dwelling.

It is hoped that the following methods may be helpful.

First: Read and spiritually digest the beautiful "Prayers after Mass" given in your Missal. They are those which are recommended to the priest himself. With difficulty, perhaps, could one better formulate his message of gratitude to God for the Eucharistic Sacrament.

Amongst these acts will be found the "*En ego*" Prayer, or Prayer before a figure of Christ Crucified, *to which is attached a Plenary Indulgence.* It is as follows:

"Behold, O kind and most sweet Jesus, I cast myself upon my knees in Thy sight, and with the

most fervent desire of my soul, I pray and beseech Thee that Thou wouldst impress upon my heart lively sentiments of Faith, Hope and Charity, with true repentance for my sins and a firm desire of amendment; whilst with deep affection and grief of soul I ponder within myself and mentally contemplate Thy five most precious wounds, having before my eyes that which David spake of Thee in prophecy, '*They have pierced My hands and My Feet, they have numbered all My bones.*' "

This Prayer should be recited when using any of the methods here suggested.

A Second Method might be to make fervent acts —in one's own words—of faith, hope, love, thanksgiving, and union with God, adding the Indulgenced Prayer as above.

A third Attraction for an excellent act of gratitude will be found in living again any of the scenes of the Passion—the proof of Christ's Love for His Father and for us. Add the "*En ego*" Prayer.

"In this we have known the charity of God,
"because He hath laid down His life for us"
(1 John iii 16).

A Fourth Way might be, simply, *to be with Christ* as He walked the earth. Accompany Him . . . using the perceptive powers of the soul, in any of the mysteries of His Life; in company with our Lady;

or with the Apostles in His public life; or like the holy women at the sepulchre.

Or, again, let us sit, like Mary, in Bethany, at our Lord's feet (Luke x 39). Our daily duties should not engross us to the detriment of our spiritual needs. Christ *yearns* to minister to them.

Why be occupied about many things to the neglect of the principal one—which is, above all, necessary ?

Mary had, indeed, chosen the better part.

Add, as above, the Indulgenced Prayer.

Another Method might be, after thanking Him for His coming, to ask Him what He would wish to have amended in our conduct; in our way of living, etc. His remonstrance will be very gentle; give ear and promise amendment; obey His good pleasure as you would that of a dear friend.

Recommend the Church to His loving care; tell Him you have difficulties; that you have friends in whom you wish Him to interest Himself; pray for sinners, for the afflicted, for your enemies, and for the souls in purgatory, adding the Indulgenced Prayer above.

A further fruitful Way of spending the precious moments after Communion may recommend itself to some.

It is to ask Him, with intense yearning, *to teach you the value of a soul : your* soul: *any* soul! . . . and this, in God's eyes, as well as in His own.

" Come and hear, all ye that fear God,

" and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul " (Ps. lxv 16).

" My son, give Me thy heart "—thy love (Prov. xxiii 26)—is the warrant for the value that the Father sets upon our soul.

" I have said it," God again says to us:

" You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High " (Ps. lxxxi 6). This is my title to be divine.

We can best interpret Christ's mind regarding the price at which He rates a soul, *by His deeds*. It was " at a great price " He bought it (1 Cor. vi 20).

" My little children," says the beloved Disciple to us:

" let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth " (1 John iii 18). Christ, however, Whom you now cherish within you, has loved us in *deed* and in *truth*—to infinity!

On its part, the soul should thirst for the strong, living God, as the hart for the fountains of water (Ps. xli 3).

Think! And return the love He deigns to seek.

The Indulgenced Prayer, as above.

A last Method is here given, which many have found useful, especially when inclined to distraction. It consists in taking the word A.R.D.O.R., meaning " fervour," and using each letter as a kind of " point," or new idea, for reflection.

A. [ADORE.] I adore Thee, my King, within me. I hush my senses and powers, to focus them, all, on Thy presence.

Angels and Saints, help me to fix my mental vision on Him Who is our common Master and Sovereign: on Him Who is ever present to you: on Him Who, forgetful of the cost and humiliation, comes to visit me in this poor dwelling of clay!

" *Venite, adoremus et procidamus ante eum.*"
" Come, let us adore and fall down:
" and weep before the Lord that made us;
" For He is the Lord our God:
" and we are the people of His pasture
" and the sheep of His hand " (Ps. xciv 6, 7).

R. [Return Thanks.] To Thee my Master and Benefactor, I return thanks, from my heart, for Thy visit this morning.

Why single me (!) out among the millions?

What in me attracted Thee to my earthly mould? Nothing, surely, in me! It was Thy doing: It was Thy love.

I should like, then, to be grateful and to thank Thee as Thou dost deserve. My words are weak; but by my life I hope to prove my gratitude.

And, not only for this favour do I thank Thee, but also for *all* Thy gifts so lavishly bestowed upon me . . . Gifts of nature, of grace, and of glory. And especially for N. . . .

I also thank Thee for my trials and crosses, past, present and to come; for I know they, too, are not less a mark of Thy Love.

" Bless the Lord, then, O my soul,
" and never forget all He hath done for thee."

It is He "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities:"
It is He "Who healeth all thy diseases."
It is He "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction."
It is He "Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion."
It is He "Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, and reneweth thy youth like the eagle's. . . ."

"Bless the Lord, all ye His Angels, His Hosts, and His works:
"In every place of His dominion,
"O my soul, bless *thou* the Lord" (Ps. cii).

D. [Demand.] Now that I possess Thee, I have a kind of right to ask for, to demand, other favours in and through Thee.

Thou hast infinite power, and Thy good-will is as boundless as Thy power. Moreover, Thou art more willing to give than I am to ask.

Give me, then, that grace which Thou seest I most need. This I confidently expect.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind" (James i 6).

Too long, alas! have I been tempest-tossed by the waves of this stormy sea! In Thee, now, do I place my trust. Thou shalt be my "Anchor of Hope." In Thee shall I dwell as in an "Anchor-hold."

Give ear to the supplication of Thy representative in my regard:

"May Thy Body and Blood stand as a guard over my soul all my days and unto Life Everlasting!"

Especially do I pray for the needs of the Church; for our holy Father the Pope; N. . . .; and for the suffering souls in purgatory.

Do Thou be the Protector and Guide of all that are near and dear to me, and particularly of N. . . .

Here might be said the Indulgenced Prayer before the Crucifix.

O. [Offer.] I offer Thee, dear Master, all that I am and have. Thou dost ask for my heart. "*Praebe cor tuum, fili mi.*" "My child, give Me Thy heart" (Prov. xxiii 26).

This I offer Thee, to be Thine alone.

Set Thyself like a divine seal upon it, though so fickle and inconstant. I am as an erring sheep, but of Thine own fold.

Imprint, then, Thy seal, as a brand, upon me, that all may recognise me as Thy property and possession, and may fear to harm me.

And not only my heart with its affection and powers of loving do I yield to Thee, but, in the words of Thy servant St Ignatius, I say: "*Sume, Domine, et suscipe. . . .*"

"Take, and receive, O Lord, my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my whole will; all that I am and possess; . . . give me only Thy Love and Thy grace and I will have no more to ask."

I shall try to give myself to Thee, Master, as Thou hast given Thyself to me.

Thou gavest all; so shall I.

Thou gavest all in perpetuity, and dost not regret it; so shall I, by Thy help. I, too, give all for ever, and shall not go back on my offering; but renew it daily with increasing warmth and affection.

I shall endeavour to love Thee "not in word, nor in tongue only, but, *in deed and in truth*" (1 John iii 18).

Thou gavest all willingly. So do I; and unreservedly. It is very little. By Thy love, in deed rather than in word, Thou assurest me of Thy yearning for it. The exchange is out of all proportion. The advantages seem only mine. Would that I could give Thee more!

I offer Thee the same ecstatic welcome as did Thy Saints when Thou didst deign to abide with them; and, even, as far as may be, the same intensity of greeting as Mary at Nazareth, on becoming Thy "handmaid."

May I be, like the Baptist, the "friend of the Bridegroom" and ever give ear to His Voice!

Bind me to Thee as it were with bands of steel, for temptation often allures me. Strengthen me that my love for Thee may be even greater than that of David for his bosom friend, Jonathan.

Thou art more comely and amiable to me above all others.

O Thou, "Most beautiful among the sons of men" grant these my petitions, that I may be close knit with Thee in life, and that, *at the close, we may not be divided*" (2 Kings i 23).

Thou art, Jesus, still within me. In spirit, I take Thee in my hands; and, on the altar of my heart,

I offer up another "mass"—as much as may be—with Thyself for Victim, to which I unite myself; and, for the moment assuming the priesthood, I offer anew the sacrifice to Thy Eternal Father! Deign to accept my offering as a holocaust of sweetness.

R. [Resolve.] I again resolve to be for ever Thine.

Now that I am a victim, I belong only to Thee; all my life is Thine; my thoughts, my words and actions of today, and of each day, will be offered and consecrated to Thee.

I renew my promises, made so often; to be kind to my neighbour; to bear the trials—disappointments—Thou mayest wish to send me; to avoid displeasing Thee by sin; to do what good I can, etc. . . .

Mayest Thou ever live in me, and, by offering Thyself in me still, call down upon me the complacent regard of *our* Father; then every grace and blessing will be assured me. Amen. Amen!

The Most Precious Blood

At Communion all receive not only the Body, but also the Most Sacred Blood of Jesus Christ. His Soul and Divinity are likewise present.

This Sacred Legacy—Christ's Blood—which we call "Precious," came to us, like His Body, through Mary. She was in no way tainted by Adam's fall; and consequently her blood was as pure as his at his creation.

How deserving It is, then, of the title "Precious," in addition to the pre-eminent reason of Its being the efficient factor of our Redemption!

Hence, in receiving Holy Communion, we may truly be said to have a certain affinity to Mary. Her spotless blood, transmitted to us without the original taint, helps to counteract in us the evil effects of the Fall, and to compass in us the innocence and purity our first Parents once enjoyed.

If, as we read, the writer of the Book of Wisdom, in his youth, "came to a body undefiled" through his great desire and yearning for the gift of wisdom, to what an eminent degree of *Purity* did not our Lady attain, through her intense love and perpetual possession of Him Who is Wisdom Itself . . . the Word and Wisdom of the Father!

Hence, will she ever be for us:

Mater purissima! Mater castissima! Mater inviolata!

What purity of body and soul may we, too, not hope for by our frequent contact with the same Author of all Wisdom in Holy Communion! To us, likewise, His Blood will then be Precious, by reason of its effects on our whole being.

"Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. v 8).

"He that loveth purity of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his friend" (Prov. xxii 11).

Moreover, this Precious Blood which we receive in Holy Communion has also in it something still greater. Being the Blood of Christ, It was hypostatically united with the Word—a union effected by the Holy Trinity. By receiving Communion, then, we become *partakers in the divine Nature* in a manner that is truly ineffable.

Our sonship and regeneration, received in Baptism, are intensified, as is also the likeness to Jesus Christ within us which increases each time we drink worthily at this life-giving fountain. For, as we read in the Epistle to the Romans:

> " If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you " (viii 11).

What an inconceivable distance exists between sanctification as a result of the " blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled " (Heb. ix 13), and that of the life-giving Cup of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, animated with the Spirit of the Triune God, Which we drink at Holy Communion!

How much greater is our title to nobility and to true greatness, in having the Blood, not only of the Queen of Heaven, but of God Himself, in our veins, than any heredity of earth!

Let us endeavour to bear in mind our inestimable

gift, our supernal vocation and altogether new generation, and walk worthy of the true dignity to which we have been raised.

What purity of soul do not these reflections call for! Who could be mindful of them, and yet commit sin? What trust they should engender! To what peace should they not give rise!

When such a price was paid to redeem us, how we should wound our Master's love by doubt, or fear, lest He should fail to "see us through to the close"!

If one be permitted to judge by external signs, there would seem to be many who are looking to find some "elixir" for prolonging life on earth, a potion that would lengthen it indefinitely; though their bodies should shrivel up and become "gnarled and wrinkled at the rind."

Let us hope we are not of the number.

Our Provident Paraclete—Jesus Christ—has foreseen and fully satisfied our needs. He *has* left us "The Elixir of Life" for which the human soul so longs. It is nothing less than the Sacred Cup of His Most Precious Blood, whereby the seeds of *immortality* are assuredly sown within us! It is an Heirloom truly Divine.

It is THE GIFT OF GOD.

With what fervour the Church breathes to God the beautiful "Post-communion" for the Feast of the Most Precious Blood of our Redeemer!

"Grant, we beseech Thee, that the Blood of our

Saviour which we have been permitted to drink in joy, as at its source, at the Holy Table, may become for us a fountain of water springing up unto Everlasting Life. Amen."

Our Union with the Victim of the Sacrifice.

Let us endeavour to understand something of what it means to be united with our Divine Master in Holy Communion.

In many of the sacrifices of the Old Dispensation, one portion of the victim that had been offered in sacrifice was burnt. This was made a holocaust to God.

A second portion remained to the priest who had offered the sacrifice.

The third part was returned to those in whose name the offering was made.

Though in the Mass our Victim is offered as a "Holocaust" to our Maker, and therefore belongs wholly to Him, still, in His goodness, God makes It over to us again, allowing It to become wholly ours.

Communion means *union with*. The incorporating ourselves with Jesus Christ has for object, and ought to have for effect, our *becoming one* with Jesus Christ; not merely a corporal union, but one of heart and of sentiments: a union with His spirit in His condition of Victim.

And thus it would be that His thoughts would be our thoughts: His views would be ours: that which is in Him would absorb that which is in us, as the

wine in the Chalice assimilates to itself the drop of water mingled for the Sacrifice.

Our store of sanctifying grace—that is, the intensity of *the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in us*—will become more and more increased, making it possible for us to live quite a new—a divine—life. Man's soul is weighed down with the vicissitudes of life, and inclined to grow weary of its sojourn in the "prison-house" of the body. The influx of grace, of which it receives an increase in every Communion, is a vital principle which strengthens and perfects its conscious faculties — feeling, intellect, will. These each become nourished, as food nourishes the various organs of the body.

In this, the soul attains its highest goal here below. The Divine "Tenant" regulates all its conscious acts. He it is, it may then be said, Who lives in the soul, rather than the soul itself.

"*Vivo ego* . . ." said St Paul; "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

What a transformation from our sordid selves! What a crowning favour and consummation!

"And that I live now in the flesh," the soul may add with the Apostle, "I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii 20). And again, as Christ tells us in St John:

> ". . . he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (vi 58).

In this way we should be glorifying the Father through Him; and, in a certain sense, He too would

be continuing His life on earth, so as still to praise and love the Father, in us.

What condescension is not this on His part! What a privilege and an honour for us!

To thus become part of the Victim with Jesus Christ in the Sacrifice, how pure and undefiled should not our lives be!

Listen to Christ, in the person of His minister, as *He* turns towards us and says:

"*Orate fratres . . .*" "*Pray, brethren, that My Sacrifice and* yours *may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.*"

With what purity should we not be clothed, to be "*acceptable*" to the Holy Trinity!

The victims for the sacrifice in the Old Law were marked out and segregated from the rest of the herd, and thus were considered holy. They were to be without blemish.

"If it—the victim—have a blemish you shall not offer it,
"neither shall it be acceptable," we read in Lev. xxii 20.

What, then, should not be our constant purity of body and soul to be daily fit to become, with Christ, the Victim in the Sacrifice of the New Covenant! "*Beati immaculati in via . . .*" (Ps. cxviii 1).

This union with the Victim in the New Dispensation is, as it was generally under the Old, the "complement" of the great Action of the Sacrifice. It is its completion and consummation,

corresponding to the burning or consumption of the victim in the Old.

There is a difference, however, between the union with our Victim and that of the priest and people with the victim in the Old Law. In the latter, the union was with a victim which was quite destitute of any virtue of its own; whilst, with us, we have the unspeakable honour and happiness of communicating—that is, of "becoming one with," a Victim essentially holy—the very source of all sanctity. . . . One, endowed with divine virtue, and whose desire in giving Himself to us is to become so intimately united to us that His life may become in a very real sense our life.

We therefore receive in reality and in substance what our fathers of Old received only in figure.

From such considerations as these one may gather how beneficial it is to approach the Holy table when we assist at Mass, trying to realise more and more the spirit with which we should communicate.

If we are not able to communicate sacramentally, let us at least do so spiritually.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION. AN AFTERWORD

Such, then, is the Holy Sacrifice of the New Law. It is something full of meaning and of import in every feature; an Action that transcends all others we may perform on earth.

Its central Act is as a "Treasure hidden in the field" of this earth. It is the "Pearl of infinite price," and about it cluster many other pearls of very great price in themselves.

There is nothing this side of heaven that can be compared to the Mass. And yet, strange to relate, it is neglected daily by many Catholics! How is it that many otherwise sensible people can become so wholly absorbed, and wear out their lives, in the pursuit of worldly riches, and at the same time pass by the rich veins of wealth contained in the Holy Mass, at their very doors?

There is an old French saying "Alms do not impoverish, nor does the Mass delay." With the good will to rise in the morning a little earlier, the Mass will not delay a person from reaching office or factory in time: nor in bringing favours and graces asked through it from heaven. The Wise man tells us:

" and they that will seek Him early,
" shall find a blessing " (Ecclus. xxxii 18).

Those who have formed the good habit of daily Mass will be found to keep better hours than those who neglect this golden opportunity, afforded to so many. They will enjoy the early sleep, and waking fresher, will be earlier astir; and, like the pious women on the first Easter Morn, will be filled with a sentiment of gratitude to make some return to their Master, or at least to assure Him that His dying request . . .

" Do This in Memory of Me "

. . . is as an evergreen in their minds and in their hearts.

Is not the morning fresh and fragrant, a time conducive to quiet of soul, and consequently of prayer ?

" For, to Thee will I pray:
" O Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear my voice.
" In the morning I will stand before Thee, and will see " (Ps. v 4, 5).

" My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning," says again the Royal Psalmist: " that I might meditate on Thy words " (Ps. cxviii 148).

But, how much better are not our opportunities for this than were those of even David himself. We not only *meditate* on God's words at Mass, but

re-enact the Sacrifice of His Son, in very truth, on the humble Altar in our little parish church and are strengthened by the "Bread of Life." This was the Bread prefigured in that which was taken by Elias, and in the strength of which he walked forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God (3 Kings xix 8).

The result of the Mass, then, when offered under such conditions, will be elevating for both soul and body. Our daily work will be done more perfectly. We shall enjoy a larger share of the *peace of heart* which Christ earned for us at such a cost to Himself.

There will be more regularity in our lives, with less inducement to fritter away time, which is, in a sense, God's greatest gift to us.

With the passing years—and how fast they speed by!—the *love* of the cross will unconsciously grow within us, and increase till it becomes, perhaps, a joy to us—at least in the superior part of the soul.

Thus, we shall be more and more like to Christ, and, always with God's help, merit to be accounted "children of God," and with this, "joint heirs with Jesus Christ" in the kingdom of God's glory, for ever.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many Angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands,

"saying with a loud voice:
"The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and

strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction " (Apoc. v 11-13).

" For to God is all glory, all veneration, all thanksgiving;
" honour and adoration
" to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,
" now and for ever, world without end, eternally. Amen " (*Apost. Constit.*, viii 12).

And so, finally:

" It shall come to pass . . .
" That the mountains shall drop down sweetness,
" and the hills shall flow with milk:
" and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda:
" and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord,
" and shall water the torrent of thorns . . .
" and Judea shall be inhabited for ever,
" and Jerusalem to generation and generation " (Joel iii 18, 20).

AN AFTERWORD

" Apostles " of the Mass

From the attentive perusal of the foregoing pages, there may be some who will feel drawn to make a special study of the Mass, and of all that relates to the service of the Altar, not only for their own

sanctification, but also that they may make this "Treasure of earth" known to others; and thus become veritable "apostles" of the Holy Mass. They would then be as workers in Christ's vineyard that:

> "receive wages and gather fruit unto life everlasting" (John iv 36).

What more meritorious or more attractive than to stimulate men to a remembrance of Christ's Oblation, making Him and His love sweeter to them than their own lives or anything created?

"It is the part of those who enjoy the heritage of truth, not to keep aloof from what is being brought home to the bosoms and business of our generation. . . . When people's principles are at loose ends, and therefore are no fixed principles at all, it behoves us to help the drifters and get their dangling lines taut in their minds" (*Talks on Truth*, Fr. T. Hughes, S.J.).

Our horizon in life ought not to be limited by our own individual interests and those of our immediate circle of friends. Though individuals, we are not meant to live without regard for our fellow-men. The lives of others enter into our sphere of thought and activity. Our faith is, surely, not merely a private concern! Christ's life is the model for our own—unselfish, kindly and tender. He would have us actuated by *love* for all men. Are we not all brethren in very truth, and not in name only,

and especially those who have been "born again" in Christ?

". . . all assemble about the same Altar; all eat at the same Table of God; all partake of the same nourishment; all continue to be throughout their lives what they have become at the Altar" (Fr. J. Kramp, S.J.).

St Paul urges us "not to fail in doing good." "Therefore," he says, "whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galat. vi 10).

We are, then, above all, Christians, and to some extent, at least, "other Christs." And, just as Christ was the Saviour of mankind, so does it belong to us to help in being saviours of our fellow-men, according to our light, and to the opportunities afforded us of doing so.

Those who are so attracted are to seek to become, and remember that they have chosen to be, *victims—with Christ—at the daily Mass*, and, in intention, in all the Masses offered each succeeding day.

Being thus filled with His spirit, they will the better represent their Master here; carry on His work in life, and come to share, together with many others through their instrumentality, in Christ's triumph in eternity. There they will be most honoured guests at the unending marriage feast which the King has made for His Son in heaven (Matt. xxii 2).

This would mean a consecration of themselves to Christ, so as to be His, without reserve. He should be for them their first and last thought.

A strong personal love for Him should attract them. And He, Who is the sole "reality" in life, and a strong light in the universal gloom, Jesus Christ Himself, will be their light. And, carrying this light before them, not only will their own way be clearer and brighter, but it will make the path plainer for others also. For: The light of His countenance shall be signed upon them; and in that light they shall have light, reflecting it so as to be a guide to the steps of others (Ps. iv). As the planets borrow their light from the sun, so will these zealous souls go, with light borrowed from Jesus Christ, to direct the wandering feet of erring men.

For, many there are who are literally groping in the dark. And many too—alas! of the fold—close their eyes to the light, and remain in ignorance of God's gift to them; and especially, it would seem, of the Treasure that is theirs in the Mass.

Let such, then, as Christ's beggars for souls, resolve to take on this work of enlightening the "little ones" and the ignorant, *with*, *in*, and *for*, Jesus Christ . . . banded together in spirit with others, in a "Crusade of love."

It is no small grace to possess this light, and one for which gratitude could best be shown by spreading the knowledge of It amongst others, in order that the influence of Christ's Cross—His example and the knowledge of His Love and Sacrifice through the Mass—may bring about its unerring result, if possible, in the minds and hearts of all.

" My Heart hath expected reproach and misery;
" And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me,
" and there was none:
" and for one that would comfort Me,
" and I found none " (Ps. lxviii 21).
(*Prayer at the " Communion,"*
Feast of the Sacred Heart.)

All can be " apostles " of His love—of the love of the Sacred Heart. And those will exercise this apostleship most who love most, pray most, and suffer most. Herein we have the three keys that are able to unlock the flood-gates of love of His Divine Heart. Eloquence is not needed, nor much learning. A good heart, with zeal and patience, to kindle the fire of the love of Jesus Christ in others, will make the apostle.

The Master Himself will still be thus living in them to continue His work of love. Then will their hearts be brimming over with true love for souls, as a reservoir, to supply the needs of many around them. The secret spring to supply this reservoir is the daily Mass. The Sacrifice of our Altars is the inexhaustible source of the infinite merits of Love Crucified.

And hence it will be that:

" The fire on the Altar—the love of Christ for mankind—
" shall always be kept burning,
" And the priest shall feed it,

" putting wood on it every day, in the morning " (Lev. vi 12).

These devoted souls who shall feel themselves moved to spread the " Kingdom of God "—the watchword of their crusade—in the hearts of others, *and particularly of children*, through the Mass, will themselves ever be illumined and kept warm in their love for God by this . . .

" perpetual fire which shall never go out " (Levit. vi 13).

They will be greatly consoled in life, and especially at the dawn of eternity, when they shall receive a " never-fading crown of glory " (1 Pet. v 4). For, just as God brought the Israelites into the " mountain of His sanctuary"—that is, the Promised Land—so will He lead those who are zealous for the honour of His name into the true Land of Promise, the mount of His eternal Sanctuary . . . purchased by the right hand of our Redeemer (Ps. lxxvii 54).

Thus it will be that our Divine Friend will be the better enabled to carry out that desire of spreading His Father's Kingdom of which the Royal Prophet speaks:

" I will declare Thy name to My brethren:
" in the midst of the Church will I praise Thee....
" The poor shall eat and shall be filled: . . .
" they shall praise the Lord that seek after Him:
" their hearts shall live for ever and ever.
" All the ends of the earth shall remember,
" and shall be converted to the Lord:

"And all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in His sight.
"For the kingdom is the Lord's;
"*and He shall have dominion over the nations*" (Ps. xxi *passim*).

Laus Deo Semper.

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AUTHOR

In Memory of Me or The Holy Mass
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